

ADVENTURE DISCIPLESHIP: EXPLORING AN UNTAMED AND  
INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO BECOMING  
MORE LIKE JESUS

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Bachelor of Arts, Lubbock Christian University, 1997  
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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO  
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Dayton, Ohio  
December 2015

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**Faculty Approval Page  
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

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## **CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
DEDICATION.....	ix
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	x
ABBREVIATIONS .....	xi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Looking Ahead .....	5
1. SYNERGY .....	7
Family Context .....	10
Early Adventures .....	13
Encounter Adventures .....	17
Intimate Adventures.....	22
Northern California.....	29
Heavenly Hills .....	32
A Synergy of Vision .....	39
Reclaiming Wild .....	40
Adventure .....	42
Discipleship .....	43

2.	BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS .....	45
	2 Kings 2: A Story of Succession.....	46
	Mark 3: A Model for Discipleship.....	60
3.	HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS .....	81
	Adventure .....	81
	Experiential Learning .....	85
	Kurt Hahn .....	93
	Experiential Application.....	97
	Christian Experience.....	98
	The Reformation of the Reformation .....	98
	Moravians, Methodists and the Great Awakening .....	106
	Conclusion .....	110
4.	THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	112
	Epistemology .....	112
	Gnosticism .....	115
	Rationalism .....	116
	Cessationism .....	119
	Existentialism .....	121
	Phenomenology .....	124
	Pneumatology and Perceptible Inspiration .....	128
	Conclusion .....	133
5.	THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS .....	135
	Ingredients for Transformation.....	136

Encounters for Transformation.....	142
Adventure for Transformation.....	151
Conclusion .....	163
<b>6. PROJECT ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>164</b>
The Problem.....	164
Hypothesis .....	165
Purpose .....	166
Role of the Researcher.....	166
Primary Participants.....	167
Research Design and Methodology .....	168
Data Collection Methods .....	172
Coding.....	174
Project Overview .....	175
Importance of the Study.....	177
Adventure Discipleship .....	178
Mountain to Metropolis .....	180
Intimacy, Authority, and Adventure .....	207
Insights and Observations.....	222
Wild Revelations .....	230
Project Conclusions .....	231
Recommendations for Future Study .....	232
Final Words .....	234
<b>A. PRE AND POST SURVEY.....</b>	<b>236</b>

B.	JOURNALS FOR PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2 .....	241
C.	FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS.....	280
D.	ADVENTURE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS .....	282
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	284

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I will forever be in debt to United Theological Seminary. Rarely does an institution have such clarity and courage to collectively follow the Lord. I am particularly thankful for Dr. Andrew Park and Dr. Luther Oconer for your vision, love for the Lord, and encouragement toward your students.

I am also thankful for those who have walked so closely with me through this process including Hobby Chapin, Walt Hastings, Staci Shupe, Bobby and Judy James, Johnny and Polly Adams, as well as Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center.

Finally, I am eternally grateful for my family. Cynthia, your support, encouragement and willingness to sacrifice has been amazing. Brayden and Brooke, you have been great partners in this process. I love you all.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to Cynthia, Brayden, and Brooke James. Cynthia, our marriage is truly miraculous and I look forward to our forever partnership. Brayden and Brooke, I'm so honored to be your father, and I pray this project will all draw us closer to our Father's heart. I love you and thank you.

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

### Figures

1. Percentage Increased in Intimacy ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2. Percent Increased in Authority ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3. Percent Increased in Adventure ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
4. Combined Percentages of Increase ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
5. Area of Most Insight ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
6. Area of Greatest Increase..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

### Tables

- 6.1. Percent Improvements for All Clients and All Attributes ... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AD              Adventure Discipleship

## INTRODUCTION

And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons. (Mark 3:13-15, NASB)

I walked out. I wanted more. Quite honestly, I did not know if more existed. I simply knew my current experience was not enough. Whether another sermon in a sanctuary at a Sunday service or another discourse in a cold classroom at a Christian University, I knew this was not an adequate expression of the wild God I read about in Scripture. I longed to encounter the authentic untamed Spirit of God . . . so I walked out. I had one simple question . . . Is there more?

The majority of contemporary western discipleship appears apprehended by the assumption that information equals transformation. While information is an important aspect of discipleship, it cannot replace experience and encounter as crucial components of change. It is not enough to simply know about Jesus but rather, the mark of true discipleship is discovered in being with Jesus and therefore, becoming like Him.

Western Christianity's approach simply does not reflect the radical mode of discipleship modeled by the best disciple-maker--Jesus. The western church and Christian Education Institutions often operate from two primary educational models: Greek and Berlin. The Greek model, which is closely connected to the philosophical underpinnings of early Greek philosophers in the Golden Age, is almost entirely

intellectual and the teacher's primary role is to teach students abstract theoretical ideas. The vast majority of this type of disciple-making takes place in the sterile environment of the classroom and equates academics with alteration. If a student is able to regurgitate the information given by the teacher/preacher, then he/she is deemed successful.

The Berlin model, as noted by theologian Jon Ruthven, "follows a research-oriented system that emerged prominently in the University of Berlin in the first decades of the 1800s."<sup>1</sup> Ruthven quotes David Kelsey, author of "To Understand God Truly: What's Theological about Theological Education?" (1992), who contends this style of education has permeated Christian culture and has become the "dominant feature of training pastors in North America."<sup>2</sup> This scientific approach to doctrine produces theological theorist who observe and evaluate Scripture and biblical notion, but remain unchanged by their study. The Berlin system places preeminent value on self-promotion, career ambition, and financial security, while forfeiting the actual goal of discipleship which is Christlikeness. Ruthven argues, "The central reason for the failure of seminaries and the academic approach to the training of Christian workers is that it uses an epistemology that consistently and with overwhelming frequency has been rejected by the witness of Scripture itself: the revelatory wisdom/knowledge of God vs. human resources."<sup>3</sup> Epistemology, how one knows what they know, is a key component to the continuing conversation concerning discipleship. How churches and educational institutions address epistemological issues directly effects how they go about teaching

<sup>1</sup> John Ruthven, "Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?" *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, 26, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 342.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Ruthven, "Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?" 342.

<sup>3</sup> Jon Ruthven, "Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?" 343.

and training those entrusted to them. Timothy Dearborn, Director of the Seattle Association for Theological Education, agrees with Ruthven's direction and declares, "There is no other professional organization in the world that is as functionally incompetent as . . . seminaries. Most of our students emerge from seminaries less prepared than they entered, biblically uncertain, spiritually cold, theologically confused, relationally calloused and professionally unequipped."<sup>4</sup> Seminaries ingrain this form of speculative and skeptical discipleship upon students who, in turn, subject churches to the same misguided style. It is the reason sermons sit as the centerpiece of much of the Christian experience producing audiences instead of disciples.

In contrast, the predominant practice of rabbinic discipleship produces transformation through examination and emulation. It is not primarily a mental exercise but rather a reflection on the life of the teacher, not simply his/her teachings. The emphasis is not on what the teacher says but what the teacher does. The student is expected to learn how to live like the teacher. Therefore, discipleship is not meant to be accomplished through lecture, but through living. Principally, it cannot be a safe conversation about hypothetical ideologies. Christian discipleship is not a safe endeavor, for it is chiefly concerned with being like Jesus and therefore, intends to do the things Jesus did. Discipleship then, is less interested in passing an examination which articulates the teacher's ideas. It is more centrally concerned with being with the teacher and doing what the teacher does. Therefore, discipleship is primarily a relational endeavor rather than a rational one.

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<sup>4</sup> Jon Ruthven, "Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?" 349.

Unlike modern western seminary and congregational rationalism, New Testament disciple's training centered upon power and divine revelation. Ruthven explains,

Very briefly, if we examine the programmatic and summary statements of Jesus' ministry, e.g., Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8, the Gospels' emphases upon healing, exorcism, and revelation in the public expression of that ministry, the explicit commissions he made to his disciples (who were to replicate his life and ministry closely, Matt. 9; Mark 3:14-15; Luke 9, 10), and finally, to observe what it is they actually did, say, in the Book of Acts, 27.2 percent of which is miracle story—more than all the sermons and speeches—not to mention the highly charismatic summary statements of Paul's ministry (Acts 15; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Thes. 1:5) we find a profile of activities that is breathtakingly far removed from modern seminary curricula. The central training of Jesus to his disciples, and they to theirs, in faith, prayer, exorcism, and healing, rarely find a place in a seminary graduate's transcript, much less as core educational experiences.<sup>5</sup>

These radical examples of discipleship paint a compelling picture of what could be and should be possible for disciples today. These accounts not only describe a type of discipleship but also highlight an experiential epistemology. The narratives of Christian disciples portrayed in these passages should reignite a process that moves away from sterile informational rationalism and into a passionate intimate relationship. Adventure Discipleship (AD), was conceived in the context of this conviction. Adventure Discipleship attempts to address this issue by moving away from modern discipleship practices and returning to an ancient and effective form that believes becoming like Jesus is accomplished primarily by being with Him and doing the things He did. Adventure Discipleship proposes this is accomplished through intimacy (being with Jesus), authority (the ability to do what Jesus did), and adventure (doing what Jesus did). Adventure Discipleship dares to declare there is more.

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<sup>5</sup> Jon Ruthven, "Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?" 344.

## **Looking Ahead**

In the first chapter, Synergy, a foundation for research is established. This chapter includes my spiritual autobiography, the project's context, and how these two combine to create the story and setting for Adventure Discipleship. This chapter also includes an argument for reclaiming wild, a definition of adventure, and a description of discipleship.

The second chapter, Keys to Succession: The Heart of Biblical Discipleship, argues discipleship is more than observation and imitation. This chapter explores biblical accounts which display discipleship it is most acutely about carrying the same Spirit, acting with the same authority, and living in the same adventure as the one being followed. This chapter explores two biblical narratives, 2 Kings 2 and Mark 3, both of which deal primarily with impartation and succession as the heart of discipleship.

The third chapter, An Adventure in Experience: A Historical Look at Experiential Education in Secular and Christian Contexts, provides a historical study of experiential learning which places a premium on the transformative potential of experience in education. The research provides definitions for experiential learning supported by epistemological positions and educational outcomes. Experiential learning is distinguished by the participatory nature of learning as opposed to receiving and processing information alone. This chapter also looks at the importance of experience in Christian spiritual formation as revealed in the lives of great leaders in Pietism, Methodism and the Great Awakening.

Chapter four, Theological Epistemology with a Deeply Pneumatological Perspective, advocates the central subject of the Christian faith is epistemology; how a person knows what they know. This chapter investigates philosophies and theologies

which have been proposed throughout Christian history such as: Gnosticism, rationalism, cessationism, existentialism and phenomenology. After discussing each of these in detail, the research adopts a pneumatological epistemology called perceptible inspiration. This position advocates the invitation and initiation of the Holy Spirit's direct witness, but also an understanding that the believer's response completes the exchange that is made.

The fifth chapter, Transformation through Experience, Encounter, and Adventure, provides insights into the power and process of transformation through experiential learning, divine encounter with God, and Christian adventure. Insights from the fields of education, philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, and practitioners of Christian phenomenology all support the premise of this project. The collective work in these fields create a compelling case for the life-changing influence of experience, encounter and adventure.

The sixth and final chapter will be the culmination of Adventure Discipleship. This chapter, Project Analysis, explores the project, processes, participants, methodologies and the results of the research through careful coding of the collected data. The data, much of which is narrative, creates a compelling story of transformation through the course of Adventure Discipleship. In addition, this chapter closes with project conclusions, recommendations for further study, and final words.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **SYNERGY**

I wanted more. I had been longing for it. As I walked out of my New Testament class and outside to a nearby bench, I was flooded by those familiar questions. Is another class, another sermon, or another book really going to make much difference? Is there something beyond these walls? I know I believe in Jesus but am I really following Him? What does it mean to be with Jesus? Why would Jesus ask me to be like Him but not give me what I need to do the things He did? Was this the adventurous life Jesus called me to live?

These questions epitomized my struggle and would continue to emerge in various forms over the next decade and a half. As I explored the ideologies behind these issues, I began to understand more about the events that left me feeling empty. I had placed so much emphasis on information, hoping it would eventually lead to transformation. When over time I discovered it simply had not, I was left searching for more. Ultimately, I began to look for the places, patterns, and experiences connected to my life's most altering moments. Here is what I discovered. The most transformative moments of my life had been the result of encountering the person of Jesus. The most significant of these encounters had been experienced in adventure.

### *Adventure Within*

George Eliot, the alias of novelist, translator, and religious writer Mary Ann Evans, and one of the most well-known writers of the Victorian era (1819-1880), wrote, “Adventure is not outside man; it is within.”<sup>1</sup> I am moved by epic movies with epic stories with epic characters with epic scenery with epic music. It is epic. I am moved by these movies because they routinely display in public what my heart longs for in private. I long for significance, courage, and impact. I long for romance, friendship and community. I long to live a life worthy of having a soundtrack played in the background. I long to do the impossible. I long for adventure.

Adventure is generally thought of as a dangerous undertaking with unknown risks. It can be thrilling, frightening or exciting. Adventure is often relegated to certain events in life like skydiving, bungee jumping, car racing, wave riding, and cliff climbing. Evaluating adventure as event often produces an unhealthy expectation and a consuming search for the next fix. Adventure junkies live for the next thrilling adrenalin rush but often fail to actually live adventurously. When we discover adventure living in us we stop reducing it to an event and began to experience it for what it really could be - all of life.

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<sup>1</sup> “George Elliot Quotes,” *Good Reads*, accessed May, 2013,  
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/301976-adventure-is-not-outside-man-it-is-within>.

### *Adventures First*

“No, no! The adventures first, explanations take such a dreadful time.”<sup>2</sup> This quote, lifted from Lewis Carroll’s classic Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, describes an eagerness toward adventure necessitating that the proper place for explanation comes after, not before it. This exuberant exclamation eloquently declares a paradigm and perspective eventually providing a process for discipleship that partnered with the very thing it advocated - adventure.

They all lay flat on their backs along the rocky banks of the roaring river. Almost everyone had fallen. I had taken the Heavenly Hills summer staff on another late night adventure. Hours before, we had walked down the ski slope by the number eight chair lift. It was dark and each of us slipped and slid under the heavy weight of our full packs. Our flashlights and headlamps became a necessity as we entered into the dense forest of the aspen grove. We navigated our way, walking atop downed trees and through thick brush, hoping we would eventually come out on the other side. Finally, we found a clearing and began our almost entirely vertical ascent to the top of the granite mountain. Staying in formation to avoid falling off any cliffs, we eventually summited. Our arrival at the peak was matched by the full moon which, just as suddenly, peeked over the ridge behind us. This was our third consecutive full moon, hike in the beautiful backcountry of the Sierra/Nevada Mountains just north of the famed Yosemite National Park.

We continued our hike until we eventually took a sharp left and began a deep descent into the canyon toward the rushing waters of the Stanislaus River. Once to the river, we explored upstream until we located an ideal spot for the night. After a quick set

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<sup>2</sup> “Lewis Carroll Quotes,” *Good Reads*, accessed May 2013, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/132494-no-no-the-adventures-first-explanations-take-such-a-dreadful>.

up we gathered to talk. We laughed as we recounted our summer stories of adventure. As our stories unfolded, our laughter often brought us near tears. God had simply been so good to us.

At this point in the night/morning, my staff gathered around me where I lay on the rock. Each placed their hands on me and began to pray. I was at once wonderfully overwhelmed by the Spirit. My body began to shake and the muscles in my stomach repeatedly contracted. My mouth became dry, making it exceedingly difficult to share the prophetic words the Lord was pouring into me. When this group of young men and women finished praying for me, they helped me stand to my feet. As I stood, I tried to fathom the reality that this collection of eighteen and nineteen year olds had all come from cessationist backgrounds, and had only this summer, begun having identifiable encounters with the Holy Spirit. After lining them up along the riverbank, I began to pray. Although it had happened many times before, I am always surprised when recipients of impartation fall when they have never seen anyone else fall. So they did, each one, one at a time, under the consuming loving power of the Holy Spirit. I looked up at the moon, which was reflecting the sun and now lighting up the granite mountain upon which they lay. I wondered aloud, “How did I get here?”

### **Family Context**

It was not a mountain. Levelland, population of around 16,000, is located in west Texas near other towns with descriptive names like Plainview and Brownfield. I spent the first eighteen years of my life there and, like it or not, it was home. It was in the heart of the Bible belt and there were various flavors of churches on every other street corner. My

family attended a local non-instrumental Church of Christ on most Sunday mornings. Both my undergraduate and graduate degrees were from Church of Christ universities. My early ministry positions were with the Church of Christ and my first para-church ministry was supported predominately by the Church of Christ. While much of my experience of God has moved me beyond my spiritual heritage, I am thankful for the blessing and foundation it has been to me.

Though I grew up in a location known for dust storms and tumbleweeds, I was born into a spiritually fertile family that knew and loved Jesus. The prevailing spiritual influence of my childhood was my mother. She spoke about Jesus with confident intimacy, which both delighted me and fostered faith from my earliest memory. My mother's enthusiasm and genuine love for God shaped my heart and mind in my most formative years. It was clear to me that relationship was at the heart of faith and that church attendance, while important, was not the measure of faithfulness. I believed as a result of her belief. My earliest encounters with the Lord were in hearing her testimonies. These stories included visitations, dreams, miracles, and fresh revelation from Jesus. As a young boy, we would often have classical music playing as together we listened for the voice of God embedded in the symphony of sounds. Amazingly, all of this occurred while we were still worshipping within a cessationist tradition among people who believed these kinds of things simply did not happen anymore. The disparity between my church and home life brought about some level of confusion in both my expectation of God and my heart's longing for divine encounter with Him. In many ways, I lived my spiritual life vicariously through the experiences of my mother. Today, my mother is still an inspiration.

My father worked a great deal in my early years. My memory of him as a child was more from a distance than it would be as a teen when he would become my best friend and eventually, my best man. As a child my father was a constant source of encouragement. Whether teaching my vacation Bible school class or coaching my first soccer team, his consistent praise, even when I did not do as well as I thought I should, equipped me to believe in myself. When my dad would kiss me goodnight he would often rub my back for a few minutes. I remember how big his hand felt on me and how safe it made me feel. I remember thinking he was some kind of superhero. Today, my father is my hero.

My older sister was initially both my rejecter and protector. At just two and a half years of age, my sister was threatened by my arrival on the scene. Although there were turbulent times, she made certain no one could pick on me but her. Once, at the age of three, I was in the nursery at church playing with a friend. After being pushed by him, thought it appropriate to pinch him in the arm with some plastic pliers. Well, neither he nor my angry elderly teacher shared my sentiments. After hearing the teacher say my name, I looked up to see a large flabby arm raised to swat me. Suddenly, I heard a war cry and saw my sister leap from her perch (a nearby chair) and land squarely on the teachers back. As my sister rode my would-be assailant into the auburn colored carpet, there was only a blur of flesh hitting the floor. She had rescued me. Today, my sister is still my protector and a mighty spiritual warrior.

## Early Adventures

American travel writer and best-selling author William Least Heat-Moon, the byname of William Lewis Trogdon, once penned, “There are two kinds of adventurers: those who go truly hoping to find adventure and those who go secretly hoping they won’t.”<sup>3</sup> Certainly, as a young boy, I was always looking for adventure. Looking back however, I have discovered my early years were a continual combination of me finding adventure and adventure finding me.

It is magical in my memory. I was just five or six years old. It felt like I was flying. I spread my arms out and seemed to float down the sidewalk on my superman blue roller skates. Though I mostly despised the strong west Texas wind, on that day I loved it. I had never experienced anything like it. I did not have to do a thing. I was being moved by an unseen force. I was being propelled in power and as I sailed down the sidewalk I smiled and giggled. This experience served as a metaphor for my childhood. I felt safe, loved, and trusting. I felt free. The experience on that day would be one I would rediscover almost thirty years later as I was again effortless propelled by another unseen powerful force. Still, on that day I was relishing being a child and enjoying a glorious moment of freedom.

The air was thick and humid. The aroma of turkey legs, cotton candy, and frightened children filled the air. I did not feel free at all. The seat felt uncomfortable and my fear was fully realized as the flimsy bar was placed across my lap. Though I had chosen to stand in line, my tears and pleas not to ride the roller coaster had fallen on my mother’s deaf ears. The click-click-clicking of the chain that pulled this death train up the

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<sup>3</sup> “William Least Heat-Moon,” *Good Reads*, accessed May 2013, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/50490-there-are-two-kinds-of-adventurers-those-who-go-truly>.

mountainous tracks sent me over the edge, literally. The coaster rolled over the top and roared downhill only to go into not one, but two consecutive upside down loops. My eight year old head flailed about and my right hand twirled above my head like a cowboy on a wild bull. Twists and turns and more twists followed until finally the ride came to an abrupt end. With my tear stained face and screamed out voice, I turned to my mother and said, "Can we ride it again?"

It was always difficult and timing was everything. The trick was to jump the fence and land in the yard when he was not looking. I was ten and had discovered the wonder of wandering into backyards not my own. This particular yard had been found one hot summer afternoon when my best friend from the neighborhood and I had nearly been thrown from our bikes by his ferocious barks. Standing on his long hind legs his big black head and bared teeth nearly eclipsed the pointed planks of the wooden fence. Though we rode away in fear, we returned each day that week until finally, I landed quietly in the corner of the yard. My friend urged me on from the safety of the other side of the fence. I took one step, two, three--my heart pounded in my throat and I could feel the wobble in my legs. At once our eyes met. What I now know was a doberman pinscher appeared then as a giant demon dog who was at once growling and darting my direction. I spun and leapt for the fence putting my foot on the first wooden cross beam, then the second, and finally throwing my body over the fence just inches from the angry jaws of the dog. My friend and I, sprawled out on the gravelly ground, laughed and retold my story of bravery with delight and of course, slight embellishment.

We ran with cups of water, which had mostly emptied out before we got to the blaze. Our panic stricken hearts pounded in our chests as contemplated if we would rather

face the fire or the wrath of my friend's sleeping father. Just moments before we had been playing a seemingly harmless game of tag with fireworks, Roman Candles to be exact. Neither my friend nor I had considered the possibility of one of the fireballs shot from these cardboard canisters flying into the field of dry grass and weeds beside us. Now, as the field burst into flames two twelve year old boys were trying to be firemen. After several futile attempts to contain the blaze, we reluctantly opted to wake his dad, who quickly put the fire out using a water hose attached to a nearby spicket. After shaking his head and fist he returned to bed, and we to our game of tag.

I was running again but this time it was a race—a race I was not expected to win. It was off-season football and the gym stank of a combination of mildew and sweat emanating from the eighth grade boys gym clothes. I was one of those boys so of course, I did not smell a thing. The sixty or so boys were divided into three lines. The contest consisted of a sprint to the first line on a mat followed by a summersault, back to the beginning and another summersault, then to a farther line and a summersault and back with summersault and so on--five lines on five mats, each further than the one before it and each time returning to the start until the dash concluded with a final roll at the finish. Each set of three boys raced. The winner continued in the competition while the losers left. Again and again we ran until just three boys remained. To everyone's surprise (including mine), I was one of the three. As we lined up for one final race to crown the grand champion, one of our coaches threw in a caveat. All the boys would be required to pick a winner and stand behind him. If you were correct in your prediction, you avoided a punishment of pushups. I stood on the far left side of the mat. The boy on my right had a line of almost thirty boys while the boy on his right had almost an equal number. I turned

to look behind me and found only two. My two friends clearly chose loyalty over victory. With the competitors ready and the predictions in place the whistle blew and we were off. I dove and rolled and returned and rolled and ran and rolled again and again. I remember no sight nor sound until the final summersault. I was at once in the arms of my coach who, swept up in emotion, had swept me off my feet. I had won and to my delight almost everyone else had lost.

I lay on my friend's uncomfortable couch in the living room of his mother's small home. I can still clearly see the scene and shadowy shapes as the moonlight pouring through the large window highlighted the outside bushes on the inside wall. I was praying—or begging to be precise. “O God please don't let this happen. Please don't let this happen.” I was sixteen and my adventurousness had become arrogant, which led me toward a string of poor choices and I was now faced with some potentially devastating consequences. So there I was, scared out of my mind and panic-praying in my deepest darkness. I prayed through the night and remember, as the first light of dawn began to break, realizing something had broken in me. My petition for deliverance on that uncomfortable couch had at some point shifted during the night. Somehow my pleas became peace and my cry for help was replaced by an awareness of His presence. “Please don't let this happen” became “Whatever happens Lord, be with me.” For the first time in my life, I experienced God's tangible presence and the peace that passed understanding. He rescued me.

At first glance, the above adventures may seem to have little to do with God and transformation. In reality, these experiences produced an expectation in my heart for adventure and provided a vital baseline for the value of risk, vulnerability and receptivity.

The last experience mentioned however, marked a dramatic shift in the way I conceptualized adventure. My life had moved back and forth between me finding adventure and adventure finding me. But now, I had been found by something greater, someone greater, in the midst of my adventure. This did not mark the end of my adventure; it simply redefined it. Adventure was no longer about the rush, but rather the relationship.

### Encounter Adventures

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French philosopher and key figure in the philosophy of existentialism and phenomenology, once wrote, “For an occurrence to become an adventure, it is necessary and sufficient for one to recount it.”<sup>4</sup> This insight mirrors a shift in my story. No longer were adventures isolated events which thrilled me, but rather adventures had become a place of encounter with the Lord, encounters which when shared, became testimonies of transformation. Fittingly, this first encounter took place at a camp called Encounter.

I felt terrible. I knew it was wrong the moment I did it. Still, I masked my shame with a masculine strut. In an attempt to be the alpha male and earn the admiration of my peers, I chased the teen down the hallway and hit him with the ball. I left him humiliated on the floor, and I returned in triumph to the congratulations of my new friends. My life had been changing and I was now pursuing the One that had been pursuing me—kind of. At the age of seventeen, I decided to attend a church camp called Encounter on the Lubbock Christian University campus along with 1,000 other teens. The first night in the

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<sup>4</sup> “Jean-Paul Sartre,” *Good Reads*, accessed May 2013, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/299819-for-an-occurrence-to-become-an-adventure-it-is-necessary>.

dorms I invented a game using two trash cans placed at the ends of the hallway, a ball, and a bunch of hormonal young men trying to prove their manhood. At some point a smaller teen appeared from his room demanding that we keep it down. I left him on the floor. I felt terrible. Two days later I gave into the Lord and he wrecked my heart. I was sitting in a class and hearing with fresh ears the story of Jesus. Not knowing it then, but the Holy Spirit was convicting me of the Father's goodness and my desperate need for Him. At the end of the class, we were given a cup of water and sent out to find someone to give it too. I held mine for much of the day until at last I found the teen I had humiliated and in humiliation gave him the water. As I handed him the cup, I handed Jesus my life and committed to spend it giving back to the One who had given everything to me.

The concert had ended and I had walked out of the church and to the bus to put away our chorus's merchandise. Over the last several years, I had come to know the Lord in a profound and personal way and was now a freshman Bible major at Lubbock Christian University. We were on tour in California and the girl who approached me was in her mid-teens. "You're cute," she said. "Do you have a girlfriend?" she asked. I panicked. "Yes," I replied. "In fact, I'm married," I said as I slid my left into my pocket. Did I mention I am a terrible liar? In my alarm I could not stop there but inexplicably asked the young girl if she would like to meet my wife thinking that would abruptly end the conversation. To my astonishment she said yes. As we began walking back toward the church to meet my non-existent wife I determined the next girl that came out of the church would be her. To my relief, a beautiful young chorus girl strolled through the door. She was met by my hurried and whispered instruction to pretend to be my wife. To my

surprise, this rather shy acquaintance of mine agreed. That evening I introduced her as my wife and a year and a half later we said "I do" for real. In that ceremony, my panicked prophecy was fulfilled.

He passed out. The weight of the stretcher we carried made of logs and duct tape had finally taken its toll. We had been hiking since just before dawn and now the soft glow of the sunset was painting the sky with reds, oranges and pinks. I was twenty-four years old and the Director of Ministry at Boles Children's Home in east Texas. We were near Salida, Colorado, and this was the first time I had led a group of kids and staff to the peak of a mountain. The day before I had anchored a rope to a boulder near the edge of an eighty-foot cliff coaxing kids into leaning back and rappelling down its shear face. The next day, we would be up to our eyeballs in whitewater as we rafted Browns Canyon on the Arkansas River. But today, we were on the top of Mt Shavano in the Sawatch mountain range some 14,229 feet above sea level. It was there near the summit that a young lady had come down with a crushing case of altitude sickness and could no longer stand (much less navigate her way down the mountain). With few options, we produced a makeshift stretcher and began the long trek back to the trailhead. What I remember most about that journey down was the conflict between my outward encouragement and my inner agony. Although I joked, laughed, sang and reassured the group all would be fine, I secretly wondered if my trembling legs could take another step. Suddenly, the man on the other end of the stretcher fell. He had passed out from the unending exertion of the journey. The girl who had been sitting on the stretcher tumbled and I was sent crashing into a collection of jagged rocks. Disheartened and distraught I began to prayerfully formulate our plan to stay the night on the mountain when off in the distance, maybe two

hundred yards I saw it. It was our fifteen passenger van sitting at the tip of the trail. It was finished.

Colorado was on fire. The national forests were closed and they were not allowing campers. So rather than heading west we went east and discovered the beautiful canyons and waterfalls of Tennessee. Instead of hiking fourteen thousand foot mountains, we crawled through caves and rather than white-water rafting, we swam in lakes beside waterfalls. We decided to continue rappelling with our campers and found beautiful spots to descend. Just before the third group came to camp, three co-workers and I decided to set up an alternate repelling site. We walked for miles into gorgeous gorges with high rock walls on each side. After locating what I thought would be a good option, I scaled the fifty feet while the others walked a mile around to find me and drop a rope for me to rappel down. After spending some time in prayer and meditation, I began hearing voices above me. While one of my co-workers was tying off the rope on a secure anchor, another walked toward the edge to say hello to me fifteen feet below her. I heard a scream and saw her fall from the ledge above me and hit the ground below me. I scrambled down the rock face and found that she had landed on a patch of dirt about her size surrounded by rocks. She was broken, but breathing. After other hikers arrived, I made several trips running many miles to the nearest campground and back to the girl. This experience was bringing new understanding to the phrase “pray without ceasing.” As I prayed I also asked each stranger I passed on the trail to pray. Eventually, we carried her out on a stretcher and she was flown to the nearest hospital. She lived but something inside me seemed to die.

He was alive. I held him in my arms and looked deeply into his eyes. My son. The scene was surreal. As the Beatles sang, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” on the stereo in the corner, my wife lay on a table in the operating room. A curtain divided her top half from her bottom half, averting her eyes from the gutting which was soon to take place. We had been at work only hours before and now, three weeks before the due date, we were here and our baby boy was about to be born. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, there was a loud and long cry. He had arrived. I left my wife’s side and followed the sound of his wailing to the weigh station. There he was measured, weighed and cleaned. As my boy continued to cry, my heart was filled with love and compassion and leaning toward him I quietly said, “It’s okay son. Daddy is here.” At once, he became calm. Moments later, I carried him to his mother in the same way, years later, I would do with our daughter. Her arrival captured my heart in a way only a daughter can. The blessing of my two beautiful children would forever reveal Papa’s heart for me. I was in love.

We hiked by moonlight. Our destination was the 14,005 foot peak of Mt of the Holy Cross. As we made our way toward the top I shared, with heavy breathing, a message that was central to the churches we intended to plant. It was relatively simple. God is always calling and always sending. He is a missionary God. As we climbed, we did things like stopping together, turning our headlamps off and listening in the quiet stillness. We talked about what it was like to draw near to God. We watched the sunrise. We celebrated our accomplishment at mountains summit enjoying the warmth of the sun, amazing views and the company of people we loved. We talked about how God calls us to Himself and sends us out to the world. We talked about mountaintop experiences and that God does not intend for us to stay isolated at the top but sends us to the back into the

world around us. We made our way back down. It was a good message. It was a missional message. I did not talk about Jesus much. I did not even mention the Holy Spirit. I was living a missionary life and desiring to equip others to be missionaries. It was an attempt to get away from programmatic patterns while stressing communion and community. What it became was another strategy with methods that depended on man and not on God. It took principles that were true about the calling and sending nature of God and developed formulas to achieve goals. I loved the ministry. I loved the mission. I loved the message.

Although this season in life brought a myriad of experiences with God in the context of adventure, He was simply preparing me for a series of unimaginable encounters producing an undiscovered depth with Him. The adventures awaiting me would provide life changing experiences profoundly effecting the way I understood God, myself, and my calling. Come Holy Spirit.

### **Intimate Adventures**

Augustine of Hippo, an early Christian theologian and philosopher, famously wrote, “To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement.”<sup>5</sup> This would describe my journey over the next many years, one epitomized by the adventure of seeking, finding and falling in love with God. This journey would begin in a most improbable place and in a most unlikely way.

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<sup>5</sup> “Augustine of Hippo,” *Good Reads*, accessed May 2013, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/73061-to-fall-in-love-with-god-is-the-greatest-romance>.

He said, “ME!” I began to laugh with uncontrolled joy. I lay on the floor with a group of beautiful Jesus lovers sitting around the room in chairs and on couches. This group represented many of the leaders of the church plant I had been leading for the past two years. We were transitioning. I had come to a place where I decided not to lead anymore but to turn the church over to its rightful head--Jesus. I had begun to believe that God still spoke to us. Although believing God might possibly speak to us was not a great stretch for me theologically, it was a place I had never lived practically. Still, here we were. After praying together for over an hour, we discerned it was time to ask God a question. I was anxious. What if we all heard something different? What if nobody heard anything? What if people said they heard something simply to advocate their own agendas? After some careful conversation we decided to ask Jesus what He wanted us to focus on. Immediately my mind wondered. Would it be our house churches? Perhaps it would be young families or college students? Maybe He would want us to focus on a certain area of the city or on worship or prayer? So, with notebooks and pens we prepared ourselves to hear. I lay on the floor. I asked the question. He said “Me!” I began to laugh.

I was on the floor again. My partner in ministry told a friend we were supposed to meet for dinner that Robbie was on the floor. “You mean working the floor?” he asked. “No. He’s on the floor,” Hobby replied. Our friend didn’t get it. I got it though--and I could not get up. A few years before being laid out I read a book called *The Heavenly Man* by Brother Yun. It was like reading a modern day book of Acts. Something in my heart shifted. I dreamed differently at night. I wanted more. Shortly after someone told me about a book called *When Heaven Invades Earth* by Bill Johnson. I read it. I reread it. I read it again. It was so far out of my theological experience my mind struggled to grasp

it and yet my heart and spirit repeatedly cried “Yes!” I felt the Lord’s caution not to allow this to remain theoretical. Soon after, I heard about a group coming to Colorado to host a four day school of healing called Global Awakening. I attended the school and was inspired, challenged, convicted and anointed. I heard angels sing. I laughed with hysterical joy. I was prayed for by Randy Clark and actually fell down—even though I did not want to. This marked the first of many times I attended events by Global Awakening. Each time I attended the anointing was more profound and the results in our communities were multiplied. This one was for me. I had fallen and I could not get up. My body shook. My mouth was dry. I laughed and cried. I experienced times of great sorrow and repentance as well as unbridled freedom and joy. I was prophesied over, laid down on, accidentally kicked (I think) and Jesus was with me. It was in that place, on that floor, that He sparked something in me. It was very small and almost unnoticeable. Still it was present.

He told me, “You have lost your first love.” The floodgates were open. We had begun to see impossible things happen in our communities of new believers. Healings occurred, prophetic words were given, and directions shifted. I was thrilled to see the hand of God in our groups and such a mighty extension of His prevailing power and love. I had fallen in love with mission, ministry and a message, but Jesus was often absent on my list of loves. Over the course of these several years of my life, I discovered that Jesus liked to talk and I rather enjoyed listening to Him. He told me really important things. Some of those things I did not like hearing. He was right. I would choose to love Him most. He also told me “I am more interested in who you are than what you do.” While that may be a no brainer for us intellectually, it struck my heart in a way I had never

understood. I would begin asking Him who I am. He told me, "I desire you." I realized how desperately I wanted to be desired and how His desire for me could be enough. Mostly He told me just three words; "I love you."

I was mesmerized by the water. It swashed and swished and gurgled and growled. It danced down the riverbed up and over and around rocks polished by its power. I sat on one of those rocks surrounded on both sides by the raging river. As I worshipped, I memorized the waters patterns as it played its own song of worship. I worshipped along with it, surrounded by the majesty of creations praise. Though I did not keep silent, even the stones cried out. There, on that rock, I experienced the certainty of the love with which Jesus had been securing in my heart. I was the beloved of God. It was who I was and it was what He wanted me to do, be loved. In retrospect, that moment in time, on a rock in a river, became an anchor for my soul and an Ebenezer of sorts to remember the reality of His love for me. I would never be the same.

I looked down at my son as he turned his attention back to the Saturday morning cartoon displayed on the flat screen across the room. Had he even realized what he had said? I was in my early thirties and had begun to consistently listen for and hear the voice of God. I believed I had just heard it again. I sat on the couch in silence, seated next to my three year old son. He sat on my right, still in his Spiderman pajamas. I had been feeling overwhelmed. We had been obedient and had chosen to listen to the Lord and only do what we believed He was speaking. The result? Our church was falling to pieces. I was washed with emotion and feeling the great burden of responsibility for all those the Father had placed in my care. In that moment, I was imagining my arms struggling to hold everything together; family, church, and my new position as a hospice chaplain. I

wondered if my arms were strong enough. "Dad." My son's voice woke me from my worried thoughts. He was looking up at me and continued to speak. "God's arms are really big," he said. "They are big enough to hold this whole world, this house, and you." With that he turned away and back to his animated entertainment. I received this Word from God through my son. I would make it a habit to listen to God who would continue to speak consistently to me through my wife and children.

"If you're thirsty, you can get a drink," I said. The man lay unresponsive. He had not spoken for days, had any fluids for almost one week and had not eaten in two. The curtains in his bedroom were pulled closed and the room was dark. His body, riddled with tumors, which were now so large they began breaking through the skin, lay motionless under the stained white sheet. It was clear that the end was near. In addition to our church plantings, I was now moonlighting as a hospice chaplain forty hours a week. Since my profound encounter with the Jesus and introduction to the Holy Spirit, I had determined not to let these experiences become dormant theology, so I experimented. My chaplaincy became a training ground for the supernatural and I became designated by my unbelieving colleagues as "magic." I was not magic, but impossible things seemed happen consistently around me, as they did on that day. I sat beside the man asking the Lord what He wanted to share with my new patient. As the nurse informed the family in the next room that the patient would not be eating, drinking or responding anymore, I was praying over him and speaking of the Father's love to him. I asked Holy Spirit if there was anything else to share and felt the compelling urge to ask the man if he was thirsty. I asked. He did not respond. I prayed again, and again, I felt compelled by the Spirit to ask the man if he was thirsty. I asked. He did not respond. Feeling silly now I decided to join

the family in the next room when suddenly the Lord stopped me and had me tell the man, "If you're thirsty, you can get a drink." To my dismay, at once the man sat up in bed, threw his legs over the side and stood. Astonished, I held out my hands to catch him only to have him walk past me, through the bedroom door, through the living room (where our nurse and his family sat with mouths wide open), and into the kitchen. I walked close behind him and watched as he opened a cabinet, took a glass, filled it with water and drank it before returning to bed. My patient passed the next day. Months later, I was approached by a woman I did not recognize and her six family members. She introduced me as the man that had touched her husband and the reason they were all now Christians. Although I performed more than 150 funerals in those four years, the thing I learned the most about was not death, but life.

I lay on a couch. More than twenty years after my first couch experience, I was back. The irony was lost on me in that particular moment. My wife and kids were sleeping peacefully in their beds, but I was awake. I was on the couch. Though my marriage had begun like a fairy tale it had not remained that way. Marriage had been much more difficult than we had expected and now, eighteen years after "I do" I wondered if I was done. I had come to the breaking point and in my quiet desperation I cried out to the Lord and He met me there. I cried for the next several hours as Holy Spirit gently but firmly exposed my demanding, rationalizing, justifying and weary spirit. I wept and repented in the glorious and awful light of His presence. Then, I slept. I was bombarded by demonic forces and saw an array of demons lying, hissing and trying to devour me. I woke. They were still there. I began to deliver myself from each one by name in the name of Jesus. As they left one by one, I began feeling lighter and stronger.

Finally, I commanded the spirit of anger to leave. He resisted but eventually left. I slept. That night I experienced a necessary dying. When I woke the next morning, still on the couch, I felt the peace of His presence. It was the same peace I had experienced more than twenty years ago in what seemed like another life on another couch. Again, my prayer had changed. “Whatever happens Lord, be with me.”

I sat on the top of yet another mountain. It was the first hike of the summer. Although the climb was quite grueling, the view from Mt. Huron at 14,012 feet was stunning. The surrounding peaks, including a range known as “The Three Apostles,” were snowcapped and in the morning light emitted an almost blueish glow. I was there with a close friend, and Jesus was there too. I sat worshipping with a journal lying open on my lap. In my exhaustion and fatigue, I had become quite receptive to whatever Jesus had to share with me. That morning He spoke a new word to me, one that would change the direction of my life. “I am going to teach you about resurrection.” I wrote it. I read what I had written. At that moment, I realized that between death and resurrection came burial. It was that day that I began to understand in order to believe in the resurrection to come, I had to let go of what had been. I had to relinquish my pain, my resentment, my hopelessness, and things I had grown to love that were not mine to love anymore. I had to bury them so that I might experience resurrection.

Not only did Jesus bring dead things back to life, He made all thing new. First, my wife and I experienced intense and immediate healing. Places of hopelessness were now filled with hope and areas of brokenness were now being made whole. At once, the Lord began to speak to us in mutuality and a life that had once been relegated to his and hers was now wonderfully “ours.” In this new season for us, there would be two

significant changes. First, we both felt convicted that the Lord was inviting me to begin a Doctorate in Ministry with Global Awakening. I applied and was accepted. Second, the Lord gave us a vision of ministry that would put our family first and produce partnership like we had never known. Three months later we moved away from everyone and all we had known to a new and strange land. California, here we come.

### **Northern California**

Henry David Thoreau once wrote, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”<sup>6</sup> Though Thoreau lived the majority of his life in the northeastern areas of the United States, it would be easy to imagine this quote in the context of the wilds of Northern California. Northern California consists of the state’s forty-eight northernmost counties and is home to San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento. It also contains Redwood Forests, the Yosemite Valley, Lake Tahoe and Mount Shasta.

A region famous for its diversity, Northern California boasts sandy beaches and snowcapped mountains, glacially carved towers, agriculturally vital valleys, the tallest trees on earth, and the highest peak in the contiguous United States. Northern California also represents the diversity of the state’s political affiliation with roughly 44% Democrats, 35% Republicans, and 18% independents. While North San Francisco is

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<sup>6</sup> “Henry David Thoreau,” *Good Reads*, accessed May 2013,  
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/2690-i-went-to-the-woods-because-i-wished-to-live>.

largely Democratic the Central Valley is mostly Republican. Overall, California is unique in that no race or ethnic group constitutes a majority of the state's population.<sup>7</sup>

### *Stanislaus National Forest*

The 900,000 acres of the Stanislaus National Forest is on the northwest boundary of Yosemite National Park and pushes north to the borders of Lake Tahoe. The forest landscape is a continuum of natural and scenic beauty that can take your breath away and return it to you all in the blink of an eye. Amid lofty crests, sparkling mountain lakes, towering trees and curving canyons carved by cool rivers, visitors find themselves in touch with their Creator through the majesty of His creation. The rugged and spectacular mountain ranges were shaped by volcanic and glacial action. From the valley floors at just 1,500 feet to the mountain peaks at over 11,000 feet, each elevation boasts its own unique vegetation, wildlife and climate.

The lower elevations can be hot and dry while the higher elevations produce lush meadows and vegetation cooled by melting snow. The forest is home to mixed conifer, true fir, lodge pole pine and sub-alpine greenery. Bald eagles, peregrine falcons and wolverines have all been reported in the forest. Visitors can access much of the forest year round through a network of roads and trails allowing them to discover the nature and history of the national forest. There is biking, swimming, camping, boating, picnicking,

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<sup>7</sup> "California's Political Geography," *Public Policy Institute of California*, accessed May 2013, [http://www.ppic.org/main/publication\\_quick.asp?i=1007](http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1007).

hunting, and fishing accessible by the 480 miles of hiking trails in Stanislaus National Forest.<sup>8</sup>

### *Tuolumne County*

Tuolumne County, CA was incorporated in 1850 and was one of the original twenty-seven counties in California. Tuolumne stretches from the foothills to the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The county is considered a recreational paradise with rental homes predominated inhabited on weekends and summer months scattered throughout. It is also a wonderful place to live with a population of more than 57,000 full time residents. The county is also home to historical gold mining towns, the pristine Emigrant Wilderness, numerous lakes and rivers as well as the world famous Yosemite National Park. Yosemite is spread across just under 750,000 acres and attracts an average of 4 million annual visitors. There are more than 800 miles of trails and more than 50,000 hikers exploring them each year. The Park has an operating budget of twenty-nine million dollars and has almost 2000 employees. The towns of Tuolumne offer arts, festivals, theater, shopping and entertainment and include Sonora, Columbia, Jamestown, Groveland and Twain Harte.<sup>9</sup>

### *Twain Harte*

Less than three hours east of San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose and Sacramento nestled in the Sierra Nevada Mountains just north of Yosemite National Park is the quaint

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<sup>8</sup> "Stanislaus National Forest Guide," *3 Forests Interpretive Association*, accessed May 2013, <http://www.3forests.us/stanislaus.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Tuolumne County," *United States Census Bureau*, accessed May 2013, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06109.html>.

village of Twain Harte. Twain Harte, a summer and winter vacation community, is found between the oak forest of the California Foothills and the mixed pine and fir forest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The village is in Tuolumne County, in the Phoenix Lake-Cedar Ridge metro area and is named for authors Mark Twain and Bret Harte. Twain Harte is home to just over 2500 residents, more than ninety percent of which are Caucasian. A resort town at heart, Twain Harte boasts a variety of activities and amenities including swimming, sailing, golf, tennis, horseback riding, rock climbing, fishing, skiing, skating, spelunking, biking and hiking. There are seven churches in Twain Harte including Catholic, Charismatic, non-denominational Bible, Lutheran, and Evangelical Free. Yet perhaps Twain Harte's best kept secret can be found just six miles out of town and up a winding gravel road. Here in the hills you'll find a little piece of heaven aptly named Heavenly Hills.

### **Heavenly Hills**

On October 9, 1954, Articles of Incorporation were filed and Secret Town Christian Service Camp came into existence. A collection of independent Christian Churches and Church of Christ churches came together to form the organization that in 1960 changed its name to Northern California Christian Service Camp. The goal of the organization was to have three properties, one for the North Bay area churches, one for South Bay area churches, and one for valley churches. In October 1965, they purchased the property just outside of Twain Harte, CA. The vision of three separate camps came together as one, and in September 1966, the first camp was held at the Twain Harte property. Two years later, a contest was held to name the camp, and in October 1968, a

winner was selected. For the past forty-five years the camp has been known as Heavenly Hills Christian Camp. In the spring of 2015, the name was slightly altered by an addition that better captured the camps true identity. The full operating name is now Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center.

### *Rise and Fall*

The early mission of the camp was simply to be a gathering place for area restoration heritage churches. The camp sessions were intended to minister to children and families and supplementing what was happening in local congregations. The first several years of camps were family camps. Families slept in tents and trailers doing their own cooking and cleaning. The first youth camp took place in the summer of 1968 with ten boys and eleven girls. There was no well and water was pumped from a nearby spring up to an a-frame cabin. Building projects soon began with decks for army type tents were raised. Shower boxes were added next with specific shower times designated for men and for women. In the late 1960s, the camp acquired telephone and electricity. The 1970s proved to be a time of abundance for the camp with family camps, two weeks of high school camp, two weeks of junior high camp, and two weeks of camp for elementary aged children. In 1975, the camp hosted its largest single gathering when over 450 gathered at Heavenly Hills for a family camp. During this period of time, the camp had no permanent caretakers and most everything was organized and facilitated by volunteers.

In the mid-1980s, Heavenly Hills reached the point when full time staff became a necessity and in 1984 the camp hired its first camp managers. It was in this season in which a grandiose vision was born and plans were formed to grow and expand the

borders of Heavenly Hills. Elaborate drawings were made that included new lands and new facilities allowing for new possibilities. Excitement was building and a deep hope for the future of HHCC was on the horizon. It was in this climate of expectation that the proverbial carpet was pulled out from under the camp and its current leadership. An immersing camp in Northern California with all the right programming and amenities had burst on the scene and the vast support and participation of the Bay area churches were absorbed into a new camp. Feeling hurt and somewhat abandoned, the remaining churches entered a season much different from the one they had so recently envisioned.

With a dramatic decline in attendance and financial support by churches once so heavily involved with Heavenly Hills, the camp entered a period of survival that would remain for the next twenty-five years. A vision to expand had suddenly morphed into desperation to survive and determining how to keep the camps doors open became its top priority. For the churches and leadership that remained invested in the camp, these years were marked by a sense of sadness, disappointment, and anxiety concerning the future of the camp. The financial distress and departure of many key churches demanded the vision of the camp change. Change was slow and the evolution of what the camp had been and a vision for what the camp could be was a long and often painful journey. The most difficult season of the camp occurred in the mid to late 2000s with the worst often appearing imminent. In this climate, something shifted and the old adage rang true; it is always darkest just before dawn. In 2010 and the hiring of a new managing family, dawn broke in the once dim future of Heavenly Hills became bright again.

*Survival to Revival*

The next three years has marked a stark difference in the direction and facilitation of the camp. The camp, existing at one time only to serve church groups within the restoration movement, began hosting churches in Northern California from various denominations and backgrounds. This convergence of the body of Christ breathed new life into HHCC and the camp reemerged as a beacon of light in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Home to eight weeklong camp sessions during the summer of various ages and sizes and hosting weekend retreats year round has allowed HHCC to move from a posture of survival to revival. It was precisely in the midst of this upward swing and rising sun that the James family was called into this surprising and beautiful context.

The camp has a dorm that sleeps sixty and seven cabins that sleep twelve in each. There is a lodge with a fully equipped commercial kitchen, a dining room and game room. Also located in and adjacent to the Lodge is an office and a chapel/worship area. There is a paintball field, basketball court, soccer field, volleyball area, archery range, disc golf course, a low zip line and a challenge course. There are several outdoor amphitheaters, fire pits, numerous hiking trails and a pristine prayer walk. There are also storage facilities, a workshop, a small school and a home onsite for the Director's family. The camp is just a short hike from the beautiful South Fork of the Stanislaus River and a bit longer walk to Lyons Lake. The blessings of these experiences have opened the minds and hearts of the camps board members toward a willingness to dream and envision with the Lord has future for the camp beyond the constraints of its past.

### *The Restoration Movement*

The Restoration Movement began in the early nineteenth century when members from different Christian groups and denominations who believed they had strayed from the basics of the faith made plans to establish a church based solely on what they understood were the New Testament teachings on Christianity. The group endeavored to re-establish Christ's church as it had been in the first century by focusing exclusively on the Bible. Their hope was to restore the original church and therefore, as everyone abandoned their dividing beliefs, they would become united as one church under God's rule alone.

The movement's most influential leaders were Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. Although the goal was unity even, these two leaders were not united on a consistent understanding of Scripture or their experience of God. Thus in 1906 this group split and the followers of Campbell and Stone divided into two sects, called the Church of Christ (Non-Instrumental) and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Though originally intending to be a movement of unity, many additional schisms have formed from these core groups making them one of the most divided and independent movements in the Christian faith.

In the movements attempting to restore the first church a pattern theology was created. This is characterized by patterning practices and rituals as closely as possible to those of the New Testament. This theology is inconsistent at best and creates legalistic structures and boundaries. In this pursuit the concept of unity is determined by complete doctrinal agreement. This is at the center of the movements many splits and sects. With so much attention placed on the patterns, the movement has often ignored the heart of the

faith and the personal transformation that occurs in relationship with the Savior. Still, requirements for salvation generally involves four things: You must believe, repent of sin, confess Christ, and be baptized for the remission of sins. One must admit his or her sinfulness and need for forgiveness, then repent and accept Jesus as Lord of his or her life. One must then be baptized by full-body immersion for the remission of sins. At this point, it is believed that one begins a new life, and is reborn. One of the key passages for this movement is Acts 2 and the patterned response of salvation. Ironically, though the Holy Spirit is central to this passage, the movement all but ignores the indwelling or empowering work of the Spirit in the Christian faith.

Therefore the restoration movement is also characterized by a theology known as cessationism. Cessationism is the view that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit including speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy pertained only to the apostolic era. Restorationists generally believe that these gifts served only to establish the early church and then passed away with the apostles. Again, it is ironic that a movement so bent on re-establishing the first church would deny the very work of the Spirit that propelled first century Christianity. Although this is a core doctrine of the restoration movement, it does not reflect the experience or theology of many of its original leaders.

Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center was launched within this faith context and over the last fifty years has not strayed far from its theological underpinnings. While the camp now serves a much broader Christian cliental through its rental ministry, the board and its core operating community remains deeply rooted in its restoration heritage. Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center provides a natural setting in which information and experience can be married in the context of adventure. This

created a particularly interesting setting for a doctoral project that pursued a model for discipleship which proposed following Jesus is more than merely believing in Him, but rather, in being with Him, becomes like Him.

### *Recent History*

Over the past two years, my wife and I have been the Directors at Heavenly Hills. During this season, the Lord has blessed us with significant favor with an outstanding board and many passionate partners. This has allowed us, in partnership with the Lord, to cast a clear vision for Heavenly Hills and instill within it practices those which are central to its mission. In addition to our continual outreach to new rental groups, we have added a significant number of new retreats and camps aimed at reaching children, renewing families and raising leaders. At the heart of each has been a pursuit of discipleship that equips participants to step into new realities of Christlikeness. We have been astonished at the receptivity of our existing churches and the local community to step into unknown places and risk experiencing Jesus in new ways.

Heavenly Hills has also been a place of deep healing for our family as we participate in life together on every level. As my wife and I have enjoyed deeper partnership in parenting, marriage and ministry, our children have grown and prospered in the Holy Spirit. Through the course of the past two years, we have learned ministry must first take place in the home. In this setting, spiritual gifts are most profoundly nurtured. The cultivation of gifts in this context, as opposed to public ministry, has promoted a lifestyle oriented ministry rather than one which is connected to events. We have been increasingly intentional about the ways we emphasize listening to God

together, which has enabled us to develop a culture in our home which values healing, prophecy, honor, and love. At Heavenly Hills we, as a family, have enjoyed consistent opportunity to minister together and share, experientially, the love of Jesus and portray His overwhelming goodness.

### A Synergy of Vision

Both my story and this setting set the scene for a new pursuit of an old passion. As I reflected deeply on my own narrative, I began to understand much of my own story through the eyes of adventure. It was not somehow that adventure, in and of itself, had moved me into deeper relationship with Jesus (many adventurers live and die not knowing their creator). For me, adventure had produced a profound place of vulnerability, which created a receptivity for the things my heart longed for and was often otherwise unavailable to receive. Often, in this adventurous availability, whether intentionally or unintentionally, I encountered Jesus in a way that moved me past the theoretical and into an experiential understanding. These experiences could not be replicated by information alone. In the consistent reflection of this pattern of encounter, I became curious about what types of contexts promoted vulnerability for life changing encounters. Obviously, Jesus is not dependent upon environment to touch the lives of people. Still, I began to consider what atmospheres might make believers and non-believers alike, more likely to experience Him. The aim of this project became an exploration of one of those contexts of encounter. I do not contend that adventure is the only place of encounter, but rather, a significant and consistent place of encounter for me and others, which I believe, has been largely unexplored and underappreciated by the Christian faith.

The combination of context and content provided an ideal opportunity for participants to experience a greater sense of intimacy, authority and adventure through an experiential understanding of their identity, calling and mission. Still, at its heart, this project was neither primarily about context or content, but rather, outcome. The consuming question shifted from merely how participants were positioned through adventure for encounter. The greater question was one that sat at the core of Christian faith: How do we become more like Jesus?

The context of Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center and its surrounding community created a natural setting to explore a new old kind of discipleship. This type of discipleship emphasized a process not entirely dependent upon information but rather, one which began with experience (an active and intentional pursuit of opportunity for vulnerability through risk or perceived risk which positions you for transformative encounter), moved into exploration (a reflective group dialogue exploring the details of the experience), followed by information (a Biblical teaching aimed at providing tangible explanation and theological expression related to the particular experience of the group), into impartation (a time of prayer in which the Lord imparts to participants an anointing or activation of gifts from one person to another), and finally arriving at an intimate implementation (the practice of what is learned and received in the most intimate area of your life—your home).

### **Reclaiming Wild**

At the heart of this project is an overt attempt to reclaim wild. The idea of wild has been stripped from its Christian context and given to describe people, places and

possibilities outside of God's realm and rule. The church has reduced wildness to a form of rebellion, but in relationship with Jesus, wildness is radical obedience that reflects the very nature of the God being obeyed. The surrender of this characteristic of God and its implication for the Christian life has deeply impacted the experience and expectation of the church. In my recent interview with John Eldredge, author of *Wild at Heart*, he spoke powerfully about the wildness of God and the churches unfortunate reduction of this particular quality saying, "The church has really tried to tame God and then they wonder why they don't experience Him."<sup>10</sup> In the church's narrow conceptualization of Christ, it has unwittingly failed to celebrate His untamed nature, which extends unlimited patience and unconditional love.

Author Randy Elrod connects this love with untamed experience saying, "The unconditional love of God leads to a life of freedom and transforms each day into a potentially wild adventure."<sup>11</sup> Embracing the wild love of God allows the Christian to rightly return that wild love. Later in my interview with Eldredge, he spoke about his love for God saying, "I love God. I love Jesus, as He really is. Not the religious cartoon the church has made Him to be, you know, the pale face altar boy, but the Wild One."<sup>12</sup> When wildness is withheld from the Wild One, relationship with God becomes reserved and passionless in an attempt to contain the uncontrollable and control the uncontrollable. As a result, Christians have created sterile settings with controllable outcomes and have contained the incredible potential within each believer indwelled and empowered by the

<sup>10</sup> John Eldredge, interview by this author, November 11, 2014. Colorado Springs, CO, audio recording.

<sup>11</sup> "Randy Elrod," *Good reads*, accessed September 2015, <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/10572298-sex-lies-religion>.

<sup>12</sup> John Eldredge, interview, audio recording.

Holy Spirit to actually become like Jesus. Our misunderstanding of the wildness of God has limited our approach to discipleship and the possible adventure available to us all.

### **Adventure**

Adventure, as defined by this project, is an active and intentional pursuit of opportunity for vulnerability through risk or perceived risk that positions a person for transformative encounter with Jesus. The particular manifestation of adventure may vary. For one person, adventure might be rappelling down the sheer face of a cliff while for another, the greater risk may be sitting in silence and solitude with God for an afternoon. For one person adventure could be approaching a stranger in a grocery store and praying for him/her while for another, the greater risk might be speaking prophetically to the members of his/her own home.

Whatever qualifies as adventure for an individual, it is paramount to the process that risk be celebrated as much as result. In a culture which bases its definitions of success and failure upon results, we can unwittingly create environments that discourage risk. However, when success is associated with ones willingness to risk as opposed to a desired outcome, adventure becomes more attractive. In regards to this project, adventure is intended to position participants to encounter Jesus for the purpose of becoming like Him. This encounter is intended to impact participants in six key areas. These six areas include: Intimacy—Being with Jesus; Authority—The ability to do what Jesus did; Adventure—Doing what Jesus did; Identity—Who God say I am; Calling—What I was created to do in partnership with God regardless of context and circumstance; Mission—

My current assignment. These terms and the connection between them will be explored more thoroughly in later chapters.

### **Discipleship**

Discipleship is more about being than doing. When discipleship becomes more about doing, it is often in an attempt to secure one's being by what is being done. In reality, Jesus has already secured our being through all His doing. When Jesus went up into the mountains, He invited those whom He wanted to come away with Him so that they could be with Him. This is the foundation of discipleship. It is always rooted in being with Jesus. The disciple never moves past this nor do they arrive beyond this simple yet profound invitation to being. This belief does not advocate that discipleship is void of doing. It simply suggests all the disciples doing is directly derived from all of the disciples being with Jesus.

In Heidi Baker's book *Birthing the Miraculous*, she speaks about the value of being rather than doing saying, "More is accomplished by spending time in God's presence than by doing anything else."<sup>13</sup> When discipleship primarily becomes about doing and focuses on imitation rather than intimacy, it creates opportunity for the disciple to live from principles rather than in Presence. This approach to becoming like Jesus, which is the goal of discipleship, often follows formulas. Formula without power and Presence facilitates a religious spirit and results in detached legalism which values routine over relationship. Therefore, the goal of discipleship, which is becoming like Jesus and doing the things He did, is experienced in intimacy, accessed in authority, and

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<sup>13</sup> Heidi Baker, *Birthing the Miraculous: The Power of Personal Encounters with God to Change Your Life and the World*. (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014), 29.

exercised in adventure. In the following chapters, Adventure Discipleship will be better understood through biblical, historical, theological, theoretical, and practical investigation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Many books have been written claiming to have discovered the keys to success. Authors propose habits, rituals, steps and secrets, each promising accomplishment and achievement. Unfortunately, these principles often replace Presence and the realities of relationship with hollow forms that promise prosperity. At the root of humanity's need to succeed is a desperate desire for legacy; people want the things they have poured their lives into to continue beyond their passing. Unfortunately, far too few recognize the true key to success is found in succession. Even those who value succession often place primary emphasis on secular strategies of leadership development and fail to recognize the divine participation that is necessary for authentic succession. Certainly there are tactics that are meaningful in the process of succession, but when it comes to its role in discipleship, what is demanded is nothing less than miraculous. In this respect, discipleship is more than observation and imitation; it is about carrying the same Spirit, acting with the same authority, and living in the same adventure as the one being followed. This chapter will explore two stories which deal primarily with impartation and succession as the heart of discipleship.

## 2 Kings 2: A Story of Succession

The narrative of 2 Kings 2 describes the final events in the life and ministry of Elijah and emphasizes the prophetic succession of Elisha. The account in this chapter provides a meaningful conclusion to Elijah's life and a fitting introduction to the ministry of Elisha. The profound story captured in 2 Kings 2 is less about what happened to Elijah and more about what happened through him. Gene Rice describes the scene saying, "The narrative in 2 Kings 2:1-18 is about a day—a most extraordinary day; an island in time in the middle of the ninth century B.C."<sup>1</sup> This passage represents a moment in time that connects what has been (Moses and Joshua) with what will be (Jesus and the disciples) while emphasizing the necessary nature of discipleship as it relates to impartation and succession.

### *Historical and Narrative Significance*

The historical and narrative context for the period of the divided kingdoms is connected through this passage proclaiming God's continuing faithfulness to His people through his prophetic servants. Between the conclusion of one king's reign and the continuation of the royal narrative, is an account of a unique story of ascension and succession.

The dramatic description of Elijah and Elisha occurs at a crucial stage in Israel's history. Rice asserts, "Israel was at a critical juncture in her destiny. Her distinctive identity and role as God's covenant people were in jeopardy."<sup>2</sup> Jon Huddleston articulates

<sup>1</sup> Gene Rice, "Elijah's Requirements for Prophetic Leadership," *The Journal of Religious Thought* 59 – 60, no. 1 (2006 – 2007): 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gene Rice, "Elijah's Requirements for Prophetic Leadership," 2.

the fragile historical context of this narrative saying, “Elijah and Elisha bridge a major discontinuity in Israel's monarchy, addressing deep ambivalence toward Israel's future.”<sup>3</sup>

It was in the midst of this potential national identity crisis that God reaffirmed His Presence among His people by assuring them that though Elijah has gone, Elisha had come.

These two prophets are celebrated in prophetic history yet, in many ways, they were typical prophetic figures. R. P. Carroll, regarding their common prophetic characteristics, observes, “They displayed shamanistic features 2), they were involved in king-making 3), healing 4), prayer 5), sacrifice 6), the promulgation of the word of Yahweh 7), domestic affairs 8) and were the champions of Yahwism in Israel 9).”<sup>4</sup> Elijah’s life, and the events concerning him, are as briefly chronicled as any great man in Scripture. Matthew Henry asserts, “We are not told of his age, nor in what year of Ahab’s reign he first appeared, nor in what year of Joram’s he disappeared, and therefore cannot conjecture how long he flourished; it is supposed about twenty years in all.”<sup>5</sup> Still, it was Elijah who, even after leaving the scene, continued to have a profound presence in the unfolding narrative of Scripture and played a major role in later Jewish and Christian thought. His coming was declared in the fourth chapter of Malachi, which gave rise to questions in the New Testament as to whether John the Baptist or Jesus was Elijah. Elijah

<sup>3</sup> Jon Huddleston, “What Would Elijah and Elisha Do? Internarrativity in Luke’s Story of Jesus,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5.2 (2011): 265.

<sup>4</sup> R. P. Carroll, “The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 19, no. 4 (Oct 1969): 407.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 521.

also appears with Moses and Jesus at the transfiguration as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke (Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:4; and Luke 9:30).

Although the actual succession story was fulfilled in the magnificence of Elijah's ascension, its roots were found in a more humble beginning. Elisha was first anointed in 1 Kings 19:19 while plowing in a field with the twelfth of twelve pair of oxen. In this unlikely setting, Elijah, fresh off his great victory at Mt. Carmel and subsequent depression at Horeb, throws his coat upon Elisha. The magnitude of the moment was not lost on Elisha as he ran after Elijah. After a momentary journey home to make a sacrifice and say goodbye, Elisha would return as Elijah's servant and his eventual successor.

#### *Narrative Structure and Theological Implications*

The structure of the narrative intentionally supports certain biblical themes. Terence E. Fretheim explains, "Though not precisely plotted, the journey seems to trace Israel's trek under Joshua backward, climaxing in a crossing of the Jordan to the east and then, crossing back, retracing that journey."<sup>6</sup> Careful readers will discover that the Moses/Joshua narratives are subtly and overtly connected to the story of Elijah and Elisha. H.D.M. Spence-Jones notes, "The parallelism with the miraculous acts of Moses and Joshua (Josh. 3:13) is obvious, and allowed even by those who view the acts themselves as having no historical foundation."<sup>7</sup> T. R. Hobbs of *Word Biblical Commentary* contends, "The relationship of Elijah and Elisha is like that of Moses to Joshua, and both successors

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<sup>6</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1999), 137.

<sup>7</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *2 Kings*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 18.

are appointed in similar fashion (Num 27:18-23; 1 Kings 19:15-21)."<sup>8</sup> It is no coincidence that the location of the Jordon's crossing is identical and that both narratives hold in common the cities of Bethel, Gilgal and Jericho. Paul R. House emphasizes the importance of this point saying, "The text stresses the continuity of God's message and God's messengers in Israel's history and places Elijah on a par with Moses. The reverse tracing of Joshua's itinerary also serves as a reminder that every foot of the promised-land belongs to God and is under the authority of God's word."<sup>9</sup> While the biblical writers connect these two accounts, it in no way diminishes the integrity of either but rather, displays consistency in God's interaction with His people. This connection also reveals the structure of the narratives are as theologically pointed as the stories themselves.

The structures of the first two chapters find there thematic center point in verse 11 of the second chapter. Hobbs describes balanced structure of the passage saying, "Chapters one and two are structured so that what precedes v 11 leads inevitably to it and what follows v 11 moves decisively away from it, while at the same time repeating in reverse order the stages leading to the ascension."<sup>10</sup> Chapters one and two form, as the writer of Word calls it, "an extended chiasmus."<sup>11</sup> This writer goes on to describe the inverted structure of the narrative saying, "In 2:10, Elisha's request for the double portion of the spirit of Elijah is made dependent upon his witnessing the ascension and in 2:12

<sup>8</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1985), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 257.

<sup>10</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 17.

the text simply states ‘and Elisha saw.’”<sup>12</sup> Seeing, as established in this passage, would continue to be developed as a major theme in the life of Elisha. Hobbs further asserts, “In 2:9 Elisha requests the spirit and in 2:13 Elisha picks up the garment, the symbol Elisha’s anointing and of successful succession.”<sup>13</sup> Even the most casual reader of the text would notice that 2:8 and 2:14 are almost identical. These verses are the visual testimony of the God of Elijah, through Elijah, parting the waters of the Jordan and the same God, the God of Elisha, parting them, through Elisha, after Elijah’s ascension. Both of these events were witnessed by the fifty prophets at Jericho, whose seeing was confirmation of this prophetic succession.

### *Schools of Prophets*

What began in 1 Kings 19 found its conclusion in 2 Kings 2. The passage begins saying, “And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven” (2 Kings 2:1, NASB). This declaration set the stage and established the magnitude of what was to come. The passage continued by detailing Elijah’s farewell tour and a significant repetitious conversation between himself and Elisha. House further discusses this pointing out, “The trip from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan retraces the first movements Israel made in the Promised Land.”<sup>14</sup> This chapter, obviously built on the anointing act established at the plow, is also clearly connected to another great narrative of succession. As mentioned above, there is an overt reminder of the traditions connected to Moses and Joshua.

<sup>12</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 17.

<sup>13</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings, 257.

While this journey plainly drew a theological connection between Elijah and Moses it is also evident that it represented a farewell visit to the prophetic schools at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. H. D. M Spence-Jones argues, “The institution of the ‘schools of the prophets,’ or theological colleges where young prophets were brought up, is usually assigned to Samuel, one of whose habitual residences for a part of the year was Bethel (1 Sam. 7:16).”<sup>15</sup> The significant role given the sons of the prophets in this narrative should be noted. Hobbs observes, “Of the eleven references to them in the OT, four are found here. They function as a corroborating witnesses to the succession of Elisha.”<sup>16</sup> Hobbs further notes, “With the exception of 1 Kings 20:35, the phrase ‘sons of the prophets’ is found for the first time in the OT in 2 Kings 2. It occurs eleven times in the OT (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1), and all but the first occur in connection with the figure of Elisha.”<sup>17</sup> This substantial observation identifies two potential keys in the continuing prophetic movement in Israel: the prophetic schools were intrinsically tied to Elisha and significantly, were no longer in hiding.

Gene Rice argues, “The presence of a group of prophets in Bethel is evidence of a new development in the prophetic movement. Whereas prophets were persecuted and in hiding at the beginning of Elijah’s ministry (1 Kgs. 18:4,13; 19:9; 22:26-27), companies of prophets at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho now acknowledge the leadership and authority of Elijah and Elisha.”<sup>18</sup> The groups of prophets in several cities clearly indicated the rapid

<sup>15</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *2 Kings*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Gene Rice, “Elijah’s Requirements for Prophetic Leadership,” 4.

growth since the days of Ahaz and Jezebel. It also seems logical to conclude that these prophetic orders were connected with the prophet Elisha. Hobbs asserts,

The fact that the term is only used, with one exception, in connection with the ministry of Elisha and the fact that most of the data used for the reconstruction of the prophetic guilds is found in the same collection of material should caution against hasty conclusions regarding the nature of the entire prophetic movement in the mid-ninth century in Israel.<sup>19</sup>

In this text however, the role of the prophetic guilds, particularly at Jericho, was to serve as witness to the central theme of the text – succession.

### *Double Portion*

Another interesting aspect of this passage was Elijah's consistent instruction for Elisha not to journey with him. Elijah made three attempts to free himself of his faithful companion, either truly desiring solitude in his passing or for the purpose of testing Elisha. The significance of Elisha's consistent reply, "As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you" (2 Kings 2, 4, 6, NASB), is not explained by the narrator. It would appear however, the context of the conversation on the last day of Elijah's earthly life and the respectfully stubborn consistency of Elisha's answer to Elijah's command, suggests Elijah was testing Elisha as to his determination to be the rightful heir in this prophetic succession. Three times Elijah tested his servant and three times Elisha faithfully passed the tests.

After Elijah and Elisha had crossed the Jordan and Elisha had steadfastly remained with his master, Elijah asked a simple yet profound question. "What shall I do for you before I am taken from you?" (2 Kings 2:9, NASB) Elisha's response to Elijah's

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<sup>19</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 13*, 25.

question has been a point debate and disagreement among theologians through the years. Elisha, who had left all he had known and had gone after Elijah, was instantly ready to ask for what Elijah would find difficult to give. “Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9, NASB). Elijah’s answer immediately exposed the complexity of Elisha’s request. Elijah responded saying, “You have asked a hard thing” (2 Kings 2:10, NASB). Spence-Jones observes, “He had asked for something that was not Elijah’s to give, but only God’s. Elijah could not bequeath his spirit, as a man bequeaths his property; he could only pray God that Elisha’s pious request might be granted.”<sup>20</sup> Elijah recognized it was not within his power to grant or refuse this request but affirmed that it would be Elisha’s if he saw the sign.

There are two predominate schools of thought connected to Elisha’s bidding. The first of these proposes that Elisha was asking for a literal ‘double portion’ of Elijah’s spirit thus implying that he would receive twice the anointing of Elijah. Spence-Jones expresses this perspective saying, “The older commentators regarded him as having asked for twice as much spiritual and prophetic power as Elijah had possessed.”<sup>21</sup> Those holding to this theological perspective indicate their position is supported by the number of miraculous accounts connected to each of the prophets. R. L. Cohn supports this position observing, “Elisha’s miracles not only double Elijah’s but seem to parallel and multiply them in their themes, elements and language. Themes repeat themselves self-referentially and referring to Elijah’s miracles.”<sup>22</sup> Nachman Levine points to the

<sup>20</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *2 Kings*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *2 Kings*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> R.L. Cohn, “The Literary Logic of 1 Kings 17-19,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 335.

Midrash which he sites as saying, “Elijah did eight miracles and Elisha sixteen.”<sup>23</sup> Larry and Lawrence Richards contend, “The Bible also reports twice as many miracles of Elisha as Elijah (14 compared to 7).”<sup>24</sup> They list those occurrences in the following:

(1) separating the Jordan waters, 2:14; (2) healing spring waters, 2:21; (3) cursing jeering young men, 2:24; (4) filling ditches with water and winning a battle, 3:15–26; (5) multiplying a widow’s oil, 4:1–7; (6) promising a pregnancy, 4:14–17; (7) raising a Shunammite’s son from the dead, 4:32–37; (8) making poison harmless, 4:38–41; (9) multiplying loaves, 4:42–44; (10) healing Naaman the leper, 5:1–19; cursing Gehazi with leprosy, 5:19–27; (11) making an axhead float, 6:1–6; (12) blinding and trapping an Aramean army, 6:8–23; (13) showing his servant an angel army, 6:15–17; (14) and predicting an excess of food for besieged Samaria, 6:24–7:20.<sup>25</sup>

Scholars contending for this position often use these miraculous accounts to support the idea proposing Elisha received a true doubling of Elijah’s anointing. They confirm this argument by observing the similarities in types of signs and wonders performed by both prophets and yet, exceeded by Elisha. Unfortunately, these miraculous signs and the manner in which they are broken down also appear to be points of contention among scholars.

The second of these positions proposes what Elijah asks for is not a double portion at all. Paul Watson argues, “In Hebrew, the *phrasethus* translated is *pi-senayim*, literally ‘mouth of two.’ What should be noted is that the idiom appears in many languages of the ancient Near East and is invariably to be read as the fraction ‘two-

<sup>23</sup> Nachman Levine, “Twice as Much of Your Spirit: Pattern, Parallel and Paronomasia in the Miracles of Elijah and Elisha” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (Sep 1999): 25.

<sup>24</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 266.

<sup>25</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary*, 266.

thirds.”<sup>26</sup> This interpretation dramatically shifts ones understanding of Elisha’s intent. M. H. Pope agrees with this point of view observing, “This original meaning of "two parts out of three" came in time to mean simply "two parts"; i.e., "a double portion" or "twice as much.”<sup>27</sup> Watson builds his case around the only other usages of the Hebrew found in Scripture and sites both Zechariah and Deuteronomy. Watson asserts, “The only other occurrence of *pi-senayim* in the Old Testament is in Zech. 13:8, and here the meaning is unmistakably ‘two-thirds.’”<sup>28</sup> This text referred to the faithful remnant, the one-third, which will be refined through fire and be called “My people” (Zech. 13:9, NASB). Watson furthers his case relating the text to the concept of inheritance found in Deuteronomy 21. This passage alludes to the inheritance of the first born as receiving a double portion of all the father has (which is due him as the first born).

Watson argues, “a more accurate rendering of Deut. 21:17 would be as follows: ‘but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the disliked, by giving him two-thirds of all that he has . . .’”<sup>29</sup> This would mean, then, that the oldest son’s share of the inheritance was twice the size as that of the other sons. The division was therefore two-thirds as against one-third. This theological position proposes Elisha was not asking for twice as much as Elijah carried but rather, a percentage like the one referenced in Zechariah and connected to the Deuteronomist idea of inheritance. The perspective of percentages is validated and supports G. H. Jones argument who expresses his point of

<sup>26</sup> Paul Watson, “A Note on the “Double Portion” of Deuteronomy 21:17 and II Kings 2:9,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 8, no. 1 (1965): 70.

<sup>27</sup> M. H. Pope, “Number,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, III (1962): 562.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Watson, “A Note on the “Double Portion” of Deuteronomy 21:17 and II Kings 2:9,” 72.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Watson, “A Note on the “Double Portion” of Deuteronomy 21:17 and II Kings 2:9,” 73.

view about Elisha saying, “Elisha is asking that he be granted special privileges as his master’s successor, possibly as the leader of a community of prophets.”<sup>30</sup>

This position concludes Elijah was asking for twice as much of Elijah’s spirit as might be given to other prophets, thus placing Elisha in the position of first born.

Fretheim agrees with this position stating, “This is not a request for twice as much spirit as Elijah has, but for twice the portion received by the other prophets.”<sup>31</sup> This viewpoint is also advocated by Hobbs who asserts, “The phrase indicates twice as much as any other heir, not double the amount Elijah had.”<sup>32</sup> This theological perspective is also supported by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown who argue, “the phrase, ‘a double portion,’ was applied to the first-born [De 21:17], and therefore Elisha’s request was, simply, to be heir to the prophetic office and gifts of his master.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, this request was not for a literal percentage of Elijah’s spirit but recognized Elisha as Elijah’s legitimate successor. Though this had already symbolically taken place when Elijah threw his cloak onto Elisha in 1Kings 19, Elijah expressed the granting of this request as connected to a sign rather than Elijah’s ability to impart it.

### *Succession*

At its core, the story of Elijah and Elisha was about succession. It was an ending of one era and the beginning of another. It was a story of God’s faithfulness to a

<sup>30</sup> G. H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 2:385.

<sup>31</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 137.

<sup>32</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 2 Ki 2:9.

floundering nation; an echo of His promise to never leave or forsake them. It was a tale that displayed God's connecting what was and what would be in the present moment that is. The passage recalled imparting relationships like Moses and Joshua and projected toward the greatest of transference, from Jesus to the disciples, and to His disciples today. It spoke of Elisha's unwillingness to leave his master Elijah, even when he was told too, a relentless loyalty. It revealed the honor a master bestows on his servant with the simple statement, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you."(v. 9) It was a narrative cloaked in the mystery of Elisha's request for a double portion and the terms of his receiving simply being to "see." Gene Rice contends, "What Elijah implies is that Elisha's status as successor depends on his ability to see and comprehend the spiritual world."<sup>34</sup> Seeing, in this case, would mean receiving.

"As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven" (2 Kings 2:11, NASB). Iain W. Provan observes, "The authorial 'taken up' is distinctive language, never used by the characters and never explained. It is language that guards the mystery at the heart of the event and does not allow us to easy answers."<sup>35</sup> The appearance of the chariot and horses of fire signified what was being seen by Elisha. There was more than a whirlwind; these fiery visions were the manifestation of a spiritual realm. There was a spiritual presence experienced as a physical reality to be seen with human eyes. In seeing, Elisha fulfilled Elijah's requirement and his request was received—the spirit of Elijah. The ascension of Elijah was a fantastic scene but was secondary to the

<sup>34</sup> Gene Rice, "Elijah's Requirements for Prophetic Leadership," 5.

<sup>35</sup> Iain W. Provan, 1 and 2 Kings (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 174.

significance of Elisha's succession and the impartation of the spirit that had once rested on Elijah. Fretheim articulates a similar idea saying, "This ascent is less central to the narrative, however, than the transfer of authority from Elijah to Elisha and the continuity in Israel's prophetic leadership this represents."<sup>36</sup> Still, this type of prophetic succession was the exception rather than the rule.

R. P. Carroll notes, "These sagas provide the only example in the Old Testament of a prophet appointing his own prophetic successor."<sup>37</sup> The singularity of this biblical example makes the narrative of paramount importance and unique in Old Testament accounts. Still, there was a clear line of prophets in Israel that were connected to the kings in their contexts. The first prophet was Samuel who was intricately involved in the initiation of the monarchy; credited as anointing the first two kings. Nathan followed Samuel and was connected to the Davidic dynasty. Ahijah was connected to Jeroboam's rise in the north and Jehu ben Hanani announced judgment against king Baasha. It was Elijah who would next appear on the scene. There was, therefore, a clear succession of prophets who were intricately connected to the kings however, as R. P. Carroll asserts, "there is no evidence to suggest that each prophet was specifically succeeded by another prophet, for example, we cannot say that Samuel passed on the office of prophet to Nathan."<sup>38</sup> At any rate, succession and impartation had been achieved in Elisha's seeing and in taking up the mantle; the same mantle, consequently, which had been laid upon him once before.

<sup>36</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *First and Second Kings*, 136.

<sup>37</sup> R. P. Carroll, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas: Some Remarks on Prophetic Succession in Ancient Israel," 404.

<sup>38</sup> R. P. Carroll, "The Elijah-Elisha Sagas," 404.

Now it was Elisha's turn to call on the God of Elijah. Paul House describes the scene and the taking of the mantle saying, "Elisha takes it back to the Jordan and asks where Elijah's God is—the God who caused drought, brought fire from the sky, raised the dead, and took Elijah to heaven."<sup>39</sup> In striking the water and seeing it part Elisha discovered even though Elijah has gone the Lord had not. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown point out the significance of those that saw both occurrences of the water parting saying, "As this miracle was witnessed by the scholars of the prophets from Jericho, they forthwith recognized the pre-eminence of Elisha, as now the prophet of Israel."<sup>40</sup> This witness would create testimony and that testimony would bring credibility to Elisha's role. The expression of this witness came as the prophets nearby exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha," and they acknowledge his authority by bowing before him (v. 15). The text implies it was their witness of the second miraculous Jordan crossing, this time through Elisha, which summoned their response.

Certainly, the Elijah/Elisha narrative is significant and iconic in its representation of divine succession. Jon Huddleston articulates the importance of the narrative arguing succession was a major focus in the Elijah-Elisha stories because "it addresses not just the continuation of a prophetic ministry but also the very continuity of God's people."<sup>41</sup> This continuity includes the Mosaic account it echoes and the Messianic account it foreshadows. In many respects, this narrative is a foretaste of Jesus' life, ascension and

<sup>39</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 260.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 2 Ki 2:14.

<sup>41</sup> Jon Huddleston, "What Would Elijah and Elisha Do? Internarrativity in Luke's Story of Jesus," 277.

ultimate succession. John Olley expresses, “This transition narrative may be read alongside later Christian experience. Jesus had conducted his ministry ‘full of the Spirit’ And promised the same Spirit to his disciples. His ascension was followed by the Spirit empowering those who continued on earth, his followers.”<sup>42</sup> The obvious common ground of the narratives are the prophet’s passing his spirit to his successors. The obvious distinction was the succession initiated by Jesus was not restricted to one person or even twelve but rather intended for “all people . . . your sons and daughters . . . your young men . . . your old men . . . my servants, both men and women” (Acts 2:17-18, NASB). The 2 Kings account also laid a prophetic foundation for key elements highlighted by Jesus and the nature of discipleship. Elisha did not choose Elijah but was rather chosen by God; discipleship is responsive. Elisha’s connection to Elijah was intimate and defined in terms of master and servant, father and son, companion and friend; discipleship is relational. Elisha desired Elijah’s spirit in order to represent God in the same way Elijah had; discipleship is representative. Finally, what Elisha received from Elijah was divine; discipleship is the result of miraculous impartation of the Spirit resulting in succession.

### **Mark 3: A Model for Discipleship**

Though the shortest of the Gospel accounts, Mark tells the story of Jesus in powerful prose. Many of the stories that connect the emotion and inspiration of Jesus bear the mark of eyewitness testimony. Larry Richards and Lawrence Richards note,

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<sup>42</sup> John W. Olley, *The Message of Kings* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 218.

“The early church believed that Mark, a close companion of Peter, reported what Peter had witnessed, and represents Peter’s testimony to the life of his Lord.”<sup>43</sup> Mark is assumed to have written the Gospel just before or after Peter’s death in Rome in the mid A.D. 60s to a primarily Gentile audience. Many consider Mark’s Gospel the first of the four gospels written because it shares such a great percentage with the other two synoptic gospels – Matthew and Luke. James A. Brookes notes, “It has less unique material than any other Gospel. About 92 percent of it is paralleled in Matthew, about 48 percent in Luke, and about 95 percent in Matthew and Luke combined.”<sup>44</sup>

The intent of Mark’s writing was to present Jesus through a fast-paced, vibrant narrative, to converts from the Roman world. Brookes proposes Mark’s purpose was “to describe Jesus in such a way as to promote loyalty to him and his teaching.”<sup>45</sup> Richards and Richards express the uniqueness of Mark’s delivery saying, “What impresses us as we read Mark today is the vitality and energy of Jesus, the sense of urgency that marked His activity (often heightened by Mark’s repeated use of “and immediately”), and the power that Jesus exudes not only in His miracles but in His confrontations with opponents.”<sup>46</sup> There are two predominate themes in the Gospel – Jesus was Son of Man and Son of God; both human and divine. This combination is noted in both the language and accounts emphasized by the Gospel writer highlighting, in particular, the lifestyle of Jesus marked by miraculous signs and wonders. This is actually accentuated by the

<sup>43</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 606.

<sup>44</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 17.

<sup>45</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, 25.

<sup>46</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary*, 600.

brevity of the Gospel. Richards and Richards point out, “Mark’s Gospel is significantly shorter than the others. Yet while Matthew and Luke each mention 20 of Jesus’ miracles, Mark—half their size—speaks of 18 specific miracles and refers 10 additional times to miracles that are not described in any detail.”<sup>47</sup>

This emphasis on the miraculous connects readers to the divine power and authority at work in Jesus the man. Richards and Richards connect the words miracle and power saying, “The gospel accounts use a number a Greek words often translated ‘miracle’ from a root that means ‘power.’”<sup>48</sup> The idea of power is connected with events in the life and ministry of Jesus and signify an explosive demonstration of God’s power. Another word found throughout the gospels connected with these miracles is “sign.” Richards and Richards note, “The word *semeion* indicates that the miraculous event links the doer of the act with the divine.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, though the miracle does not originate with the doer, the event is intrinsically tied to the one demonstrating the sign. These signs and wonders often produced a combination of anxiety and astonishment in those that witnessed them. The display of power exercised by Jesus was so astounding, those who personally experienced them were often afraid and amazed. In fact, on three different occasions, Mark mentions Jesus’ miracles produced fearful spectators (1:27; 10:24, 32). With this direction in mind, Mark wastes no time emphasizing who Jesus was and what Jesus did through the many accounts of His power and authority.

<sup>47</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary*, 601.

<sup>48</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary*, 601.

<sup>49</sup> Larry Richards and Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher’s Commentary*, 602.

*Revealing Jesus*

In the first chapter of Mark's Gospel the authority of Jesus is on full display. The one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit is himself baptized, receiving the Spirit that would immediately lead him into a desert showdown with Satan—whose work Jesus had come to destroy. Upon His triumphal return, Jesus entered Galilee preaching, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15, NASB). Then Jesus went to Capernaum and when the people heard Him they were amazed, “for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes” (1:22, NASB). This is the first public recognition of Jesus’ authority but it would immediately be displayed again. This occasion would mark Jesus’ second encounter with the demonic realm in the first chapter. This time however, Jesus did not face temptation, rather, the demon was terrified. Recognizing Jesus for who He was, the unclean spirit was rebuked, quieted and kicked out. Once again the people were amazed saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him” (1:27, NASB).

Again, Mark uses the word “immediately” to bring the reader into the next miraculous sign. This time, it was the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law who, at the touch of Jesus’ hand, was cured from her fever. In this occurrence, Jesus authority was represented not with words but through the laying on of hands. Soon after, Mark indicates the floodgates were open and by evening the town was bringing all who were sick and demon possessed. Jesus heals them and casts out demons silencing them along the way—His authority on full display. Yet here, after the chaos and while everyone slept, Jesus slips away to a quiet place, separating himself from the crowds to be found in the

intimacy of the Presence of His Father. The chapter concludes with a stunning statement that lays the foundation of Jesus' regenerating ministry and reveals the heart of his redeeming activity. "And He went into their synagogues and throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons" (1:39, NASB). This foreshadowing statement would soon be realized in the lives of those closest to Him who would be called away to be with Him, identified, positioned, and then sent out to preach and given authority to cast out demons.

In the first several chapters of the Gospel, Jesus exercises authority, which is put on full display in His attack on the spiritual realm; His ability to forgive sins; His command of nature; His capacity to heal bodies; and the teaching immediately recognized as greater than the scribes and religious teachers of the day. These testify about Jesus; not simply as an accreditation of His teaching but recognition of His mission, which was to destroy the work of the devil. Clearly, Mark shares repeated clashes between Jesus and the demonic realm. Not only did the confronted demons recognize the identity of Jesus as the Christ, they were also subject to His power and authority.

### *Power and Authority*

Charles H. Kraft talks about the interrelatedness of biblical authority and power. Kraft describes the Greek word for power, saying, "*Dunamis* (power) occurs some 118 times in the New Testament. It is the normal word for power, might, strength or force, and is often used in the plural to refer to miracles ("wonders") in the phrase miracles and wonders, as in Acts 2:22, 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:4; or to supernatural beings

(“powers”) as in Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:24, Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22.”<sup>50</sup>

While these instances represent overt demonstrations of God’s power, they are exercised in the context of authority or *exousia*. Kraft makes a subtle but important differentiation between power and authority saying, “*Exousia*, though often referring to power, focuses on the right to use power rather than on the power itself.”<sup>51</sup> Biblical authority then, is not the power itself but the ability to wield it. Richard A. Dillon describes the word *exousia* as being “formed from the feminine participle of the verb *exestin*, ‘it is free (or) open,’ ‘it is permitted’; and so it means the legitimacy with which one acts or decides, the absence of legal constraints or external hindrances to one’s initiative (Latin *auctoritas*).”<sup>52</sup> Authority then, reflects permission and commission to do and to act. Dillon furthers the idea of authority saying, “Indeed, *exousia* draws surprisingly close to freedom (see 1 Cor 8:9) and can mean, in the full spectrum of human relations, the freedom to act or decide.”<sup>53</sup> According to Kraft the word *exousia* “occurs 108 times in the New Testament,”<sup>54</sup> and is always related to people.

The Gospel of Mark makes it clear that this authority does not have human origins but is given by God alone. James R. Edwards observes that Jesus receives this “at his baptism, and that it constitutes the essence of his divine sonship and unique confidence

<sup>50</sup> Charles Kraft, *I Give You Authority: Practicing the Authority Jesus Gave Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2012), 66–67.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Kraft, *I Give You Authority*, 67.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Dillon, “‘As One Having Authority’ (Mark 1:22): The Controversial Distinction of Jesus’ Teaching,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 57, no. 1 (Jan 1995): 98.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Dillon, “‘As One Having Authority’ (Mark 1:22),” 98.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Kraft, *I Give You Authority*, 67.

to act in God's behalf.”<sup>55</sup> In this way authority is likened to a birthright given to Jesus as He is identified by the Father as ‘My Son.’ Baptism then, was the inaugurating event declaring Jesus’ identity, calling and empowerment for ministry. Edwards goes on to describe the reception of *exousia* saying, “It is thus authority from without, conferred rather than innate, official rather than native.<sup>56</sup> In this way, Jesus operates in both power and authority as a man laying aside the privileges of being God in order to portray what might be possible for all who would be indwelled and empowered by the same Holy Spirit.

Mark creates an awareness of Jesus’ authority early in his Gospel. Mark 1:21-28 displays Jesus' authority over demonic power in the deliverance of the man with an unclean spirit. Edwards observes an obvious connection between the first miracle in the Mark’s gospel and the first parable saying, “The first miracle and the first parable in Mark, in other words, represent Jesus vanquishing the kingdom of Satan. The presence of the image of the Mighty One who overcomes the strong man in an exorcism as well as in a parable (3:27) is an argument in favor of its origin in Jesus.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, exorcism represented the reality of God’s reign. Jesus was therefore exercising authority as an advancement of the Kingdom over and against the powers of darkness.

So why is all of this so important? Mark laid an immediate foundation for the purposes of Jesus and the power and authority He operated with to carry out His calling. Yet, Mark was not simply talking about power and authority in the context of what was

<sup>55</sup> James Edwards, “The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 37, no. 2 (Jun 1994): 218.

<sup>56</sup> James Edwards, “The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” 219.

<sup>57</sup> James Edwards, “The Authority of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,” 230.

or would be available to Jesus alone. Rather the Greek words *dunamis*, power, and *exousia*, authority would be representative of what Jesus would give His disciples. In fact (the term is found nine times in Mark - six with reference to Jesus (1:22, 27; 2:10; 11:28, 29, 33), twice of the apostles (3:15, 6:7), and once in the simile of the man who "gave authority over his house to his servants" (13:34), which doubtless is an allusion to the disciples of Jesus. In the three instances where Jesus is not the subject, *exousia* describes the delegation of his authority on the disciples. Thus every occurrence of *exousia* in Mark reflects either directly or indirectly the authority of Jesus. Both power and authority are found in and flow from Jesus; firstly as He employs and secondly He empowers. It was the same purpose, to preach and cast out demons, which Jesus would call His disciples to do. It was the same intimacy that Jesus experienced with the Father on the mountain, which He would offer to those He called. It was the same authority, the Holy Spirit in and on Him, which He would give to those He sent.

### *Called and Sent*

Much of the content in the first three chapters of the Gospel of Mark was an expression of Jesus authority, thus establishing that *exousia* was His and His to give to His followers, thus making them an extension of Himself and His mission on earth. Like the first major section in the Gospel, the second, 3:13-6:6, begins with a commissioning narrative. Mark 3:13-15 is the first example, and the shortest one, of Jesus' multiplying legacy; a clear model of impartation and succession. "And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He

appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons” (Mark 3:13-15, NASB).

The setting shifts and the vivid scene at sea quickly morphs into a mountain escape. Robert James argues, “This could be understood in two ways: (1) Jesus left the area close by the sea of Galilee and went up into the hill country or (2) this is a prelude to the setting of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7), which Mark does not record.”<sup>58</sup> Either way, the stark contrast appears intentional and readily catches the reader’s attention. There on the mountain and away from the chaos of the crowds, Jesus called “those whom He Himself wanted” (Mark 3:13, NASB). Robert A Guelich talks about the importance of the mountain setting saying, “Many view it to have more theological than geographical significance for Mark. Therefore, against its OT context ‘the mountain’ represents a place of divine revelation, a place near to God.”<sup>59</sup> Joel Marcus offers this observation about the potential theological role of the mountainous scene saying, “In the Septuagint Mark’s phrase *anabainein eis to oros* (‘to go up the mountain’) occurs twenty-four times, of which eight are in the Pentateuch, and most of the latter refer to Moses.”<sup>60</sup> Exodus 19:3 is a fascinating example, as it so closely connected the mountain of God with the prophetic word concerning Israel being God’s treasured possession. This would prove analogous to the way Jesus chose the Twelve for intimacy with Himself and therefore, by association, with God. Another potentially symbolic ascent occurs in Exodus 24:1-4, where Moses goes up to Sinai with a group of priests and elders and sets

<sup>58</sup> Robert James Dr. Utley, *The Gospel According to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, vol. Volume 2, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 41.

<sup>59</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34a* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1989), 156.

<sup>60</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8* (New Haven and London: Doubleday, 2000), 266.

up pillars signifying the twelve tribes. Joel Marcus indicates, “The Markan linkage between the ascent to the mountain, association with a group of leaders, and the number twelve also has a Mosaic parallel.”<sup>61</sup>

Still, is the reference here in chapter three chiefly theological or more simply geographical? Guelich observes, “The other ten occurrences of “mountain” in Mark are traditional and refer to a mountain or the hill country (5:5, 11; 6:46; 9:2, 9; 11:1, 23; 13:3, 14; 14:26) with the last five referring specifically to the Mount of Olives.”<sup>62</sup> While there are potential theological implications to the use of mountains throughout Scripture, it appears this trend would tend to support a perspective Mark is not necessarily making a theological point but simply referring to a geographical location. At the very least, the mountain represented a geographical location, which distinguished between the private and public ministry of Jesus; which in some way was a theological statement in itself.

It is at this point in the narrative Jesus calls those He wanted from the mountainside. The significance of this invitation can be lost when casually observed. Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida express the meaningful contextual implications of the words describing Jesus choice saying, “the word *proskaloumai* ‘summon,’ ‘call to oneself,’ ‘invite’: with one exception (15:44, Pilate to the centurion) this verb in Mark is used always of Jesus’ calling the disciples (3:13, 6:7, 8:1, 10:42, 12:43) or the crowd (3:23, 7:14, 8:34).<sup>63</sup> Joel Marcus furthers this idea asserting, “Both the middle voice of *proskaleitai* (‘called to himself’) and the pleonastic *autos* (‘himself’)

<sup>61</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 266.

<sup>62</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34a*, 156.

<sup>63</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1993), 111.

emphasize Jesus' power of choice, which mirrors the sovereign electing power of God in the Old Testament; in Isaiah 45:4, significantly, divine election is accompanied by a renaming, as in Mark.<sup>64</sup> Jesus' calling reflects what every other action in His life reveals; intimacy with His Father pouring out into Kingdom decisions which are often counter-intuitive for the un-renewed mind. Jesus' choice had direction and indicates a calling to Himself those He wanted for specific purposes. David E. Garland aptly observes, "This call creates a distinction between those who follow after him desperately seeking healing, those who are only caught up in the spectacle of these strange events, and those who are summoned to follow after him as disciples with a particular task."<sup>65</sup>

The sovereign choice Jesus made connects to a familiar passage in the fourth Gospel. Jesus reminds His disciples that they are no longer slaves but are now, because of the intimacy of the relationship, friends. He continues by reminding His friends it was He that initiated the relationship. "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you" (John 15:16, NASB). Jesus' choice denotes friendship but also demands fruit. It should be noted, however, this fruit was not the result of the disciple's hard work, effort, or ingenuity. The fruit they would bear, which would remain, was the result of the Father's gracious generosity to any request made in the name of Jesus. This point connects back to Mark's Gospel and Jesus' call to come away.

<sup>64</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 266.

<sup>65</sup> David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 89.

### *Come Away*

Guelich describes Jesus' call by recounting the verbs usages in the Gospel of Mark. Guelich observes, "The verb for 'called' occurs nine times, eight of which offer almost a formulaic 'summons' of the disciples, the crowds, or a centurion for teaching or instruction (3:23; 6:7; 7:14; 8:1, 34; 10:42; 12:43; 15:44). The usage here, however, has more the sense of 'to call' or 'to select' as used in Acts 2:39; 13:2; 16:10)."<sup>66</sup> As significant as the call of Christ was, the context and use of the verb indicated even more. Guelich continues saying, "Literally, it means 'to come away,' 'to depart,' and connotes one leave one's former way of life and a type of 'unreserved discipleship.'"<sup>67</sup> Joel Marcus agrees and argues, "The verb 'came away' is probably significant, since Mark could have simply said 'came'; the use of the compounded form is perhaps a reminder that following Jesus means leaving other things behind."<sup>68</sup> Though Jesus chose and made the call, the text tells of the disciple's response; "they came."

Just as important as what the disciples were leaving behind was what they were coming to. In Jesus' calling of these men, He makes it clear the foundation of discipleship is intimacy. Clearly, the first task stressed in being a follower of Jesus is "being with Jesus." There is a dramatic difference between hanging out with Jesus and following Him. Being with Jesus is an expression of intimacy leading to imitation. Jesus understands that it is this "being" which leads to the "doing." The foundation is clearly illustrated—all of one's doing is accomplished out of the overflow of one's being. Sanders L. Wilson remarks, "Jesus, we are told in verse 14, called them, first of all, simply 'that

<sup>66</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34a*, 157.

<sup>67</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34a*, 156.

<sup>68</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 266.

they might be with him.' Does that not astound you? Knock your socks off? Jesus just wants to be with you. He doesn't just want to use you, he wants to enjoy you."<sup>69</sup> Jesus invites them into discipleship as friends and built upon intimate relationship. This intimacy is not the means to another end; it is the core of the calling and an end in and of itself. Everything is built upon this relationship which represents something a disciple does not grow past but only more deeply into.

In intimacy, the disciples discovered identity. The text says, "He appointed twelve" (Mark 3:14, NASB). This is a radical distinction expressed the future of Jesus mission, both symbolically and practically. Marcus asserts, "The use of *poiein* for 'to appoint' is unclassical, reflecting a Semitism found in the LXX and elsewhere in the NT. The root meaning of the verb is 'to do,' 'to make,' or 'to create,' and it is prominent in Genesis 1."<sup>70</sup> Garland concurs saying, "The verb *poieo* means 'to make' or 'to create' and recalls biblical themes."<sup>71</sup> This indicates Jesus was doing something new. It was the making or creating of the new covenant and the new Israel. Guelich argues, "The appointing of Twelve offered a sign of the expected eschatological restoration of all God's People."<sup>72</sup> The number was so symbolically vital to the restoration "The Twelve" became a frequent description of the apostles in Mark's Gospel. While this collection of disciples had a great emblematic meaning for the entire nation, it was just as significant for the disciples themselves. In being called, chosen and appointed, these men discovered who they were

<sup>69</sup> Sanders L. Wilson, "Discipleship According to Jesus: A Sermon on Mark 3:13-19," *Presbyterian*, 16, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 76.

<sup>70</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 262.

<sup>71</sup> David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*. 90.

<sup>72</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 34a*, 158.

and their identities become cemented by the relationship initiated and established by Jesus.

Controversy surrounds the text at this point as some early manuscripts add, “whom he also named apostles.” This is a point of debate since the majority of manuscripts do not have these words included. John D. Grassmick addresses this issue saying, “Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts and most early versions omit the phrase, ‘designating them apostles.’”<sup>73</sup> Marcus explains, “Although these are strong witnesses (manuscripts including the phrase), other good manuscripts leave the words out, and one manuscript places them differently. This variation suggests that the reference to apostles is not part of the original text but an assimilation to Luke 6:13.”<sup>74</sup> Marcus further clarifies his position saying, “Elsewhere in Mark, ‘apostle’ appears only once, in 6:30, where it does not have its later technical significance but simply means a person sent out (6:7).”<sup>75</sup> Ironically, the second task found in the disciples calling was their sending. It was, in fact, their position of intimacy expressed in being with Jesus that would be the basis for their mission; to declare and demonstrate was had been embodied in the person of Jesus. Paul R. McReynolds sees significance in the word *apostle* potentially being present and believes it is consistent with the text. McReynolds affirms, “It is important to note that the verb *send off* is the same word as the noun *apostle*. A modern synonym would be *delegate*; so the text would read, ‘That He might delegate the delegates to

<sup>73</sup> John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), vol. 2: 116.

<sup>74</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 263.

<sup>75</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 263.

announce good news.”<sup>76</sup> Yet, if these *called* ones were also *sent* ones, what where they sent to do?

### *Sent Out*

At this point, the text moves from the task of being called into the tasks of being sent. James A. Brooks observes the dual purposes of the summons indicated in the last part of v. 14 and the first part of v. 15, “that they might be with Jesus (one of the most important elements in being a disciple) and that they might be sent on a mission to proclaim the advent of the kingdom of God and demonstrate it by exorcising demons (cf. 6:7–12).”<sup>77</sup> The text specifically reads, “and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons” (3:14, NASB). If this sounds familiar it is because these are the very things Mark notes Jesus doing in verse 39 of the first chapter: “And He went into their synagogues and throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons” (1:39, NASB). R. H. Mounce suggests, “Preaching is the timeless link between God’s redemptive act and man’s apprehension of it.”<sup>78</sup> It is also clear that preaching is not an eloquent art intended to operate without a demonstration of the Spirit’s power. Thus the transition is expected. William Hendriksen contends, “With so many sick to be healed, so many demoniacs to be set free, so much preaching needed, it was natural that Jesus would authorize some of his followers to have a share in the work he himself was

<sup>76</sup> Paul R. McReynolds, *Mark: Unlocking the Scriptures for You*, Standard Bible Studies (Cincinnati, OH: Standard, 1989), 39.

<sup>77</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 71–72.

<sup>78</sup> R. H. Mounce, “Preaching,” ed. D. R. W. Wood, et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 951.

doing.”<sup>79</sup> This, like the account of Elijah and Elisha, was about succession. Jesus is simply commissioning the disciples to do what He had been doing and gives them exactly what was necessary to accomplish the mission; authority. In other words, they were not simply recipients of this explosive power (*dunamis*) but also avenues through which this power was rightly exercised (*exousia*).

At this point in the text, there seems to be tension; how can the Twelve be called (to be with Him) and also sent (away from Him)? Readers may suggest these two missions stand in opposition to one another rather than agreement. At a casual reading there may even appear to be a contradiction in the purposes of Jesus summons. Yet a closer look and broader reflection might shed appropriate light on the connection of these two tasks. Marcus argues, “This tension between being with Jesus and being sent out by Him is most simply resolved by interpreting 3:14 and 3:15 sequentially: now the disciples are with Jesus, but later he will send them out to preach and exorcise (6:7, 12-13).”<sup>80</sup> Still, though a “now” and “later” argument may have some merit, calling and sending are not mutually exclusive and often happen simultaneously. In fact, there is a cyclical nature to calling and sending. Most of the time while one is “being with Jesus” he/she is representing Him to others as a herald of the Kingdom and deliverer of the oppressed. As an extension of what Jesus had been doing (preaching and casting out demons), the Twelve were to represent Him or perhaps more accurately, re-present Him. This re-presenting was made possible through the constant combination of calling and sending. Robert G. Bratcher articulates his insight on the grammatical structure combining these

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<sup>79</sup> William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 122.

<sup>80</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Anchor Bible: Mark 1-8*, 267.

two purposes saying, “The two *hina* ‘in order that’ clauses indicate purpose and are coordinate: ‘that they be with him and that he send them’ are the two purposes for which Jesus appointed the twelve men.”<sup>81</sup> These purposes therefore, did not stand in contradiction to one another but were collaboratively complimentary in the accomplishment of their mission. The apostles could not properly re-present Jesus unless they were both “with Him” and “sent” from Him.

Another structural point is made by Bratcher about the phrase “to preach and to have authority.” Bratcher contends, “the two infinitives ‘to preach’ and ‘to have authority’ are coordinate, and are both the object of *apostellō* ‘send out.’ A translation should preserve this construction if possible rather than make the second infinitive a subordinate clause (as does BFBS).<sup>82</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent comments about the connection of authority to preaching and casting out demons. Vincent argues the Gospel writer, “The power of preaching and the power of exorcising were so different that special mention is made of the divine authority with which they would need to be clothed. The power of driving out demons was given that they might apply it in confirmation of their teaching.”<sup>83</sup> Though the structure is awkward the theological implication was clear that one could not perform the task of casting out demons without the ability to do so. This was echoed in the sending of the Twelve in Chapter 6 saying, “And He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean

<sup>81</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 112.

<sup>82</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, 112.

<sup>83</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 177.

spirits" (Mark 6:7, NASB). In this respect, authority was the agent that made possible the mission.

While many scholars are quick to determine the primary purpose of demonstrating power was to bring credibility to teaching it may, in fact, actually stand on its own merit. While declaration and demonstration of the Kingdom go hand in hand, it was not, in this writer's opinion, to chiefly confirm teaching. Rather, miraculous displays of power were an assault on the demonic realm and were in line with Jesus purpose of destroying the work of the devil. While preaching was a declaration and revelation of the Father's truth, the recipients of the truth were in need of deliverance, healing, and wholeness to receive and walk in it. Therefore, stomping out darkness was not simply a sign which secured the legitimacy of a message; it was a divine display of the power of God to set people free thus equipping them to walk in the light of the Word.

### *Responsive, Relational, Representative*

Several characteristics about discipleship become readily apparent after a careful study of this text. First, discipleship is primarily responsive. Wilson describes the process saying, "He calls. He appoints. He commissions. We respond. Our temptation, in this day of proactive leadership, is to forget Who is in charge?"<sup>84</sup> Christian culture can easily be caught up in leadership development forgetting that discipleship is less about leading and more about following. The primary quality of discipleship is not represented in how well one leads but rather how closely one follows. Churches have emphasized leadership

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<sup>84</sup> Sanders L. Wilson, "Discipleship According to Jesus: A Sermon on Mark 3:13-19," 74.

classes, workshops, programs, and training modules and forgotten true leadership evolves from good followership.

Even as Christian leaders, the primary task is to be a good follower of Jesus. Otherwise leadership is derived from one's own skill, ingenuity and effort. Before long, the tasks and responsibilities of leadership create a culture replacing careful attention to the Lord and His voice with goals, strategies and well thought out plans. These become traps creating expectations which imply success is completely dependent on one's leadership capacity rather than how well one follows Jesus. If leaders are not careful they will replace responsiveness with initiative and forget they did not choose Him but were chosen by Him. This does not imply disciples are not leaders or initiators but rather emphasizes they will always be primarily and essentially followers.

The second clear quality revealed in the text declares discipleship is relational. The heart of discipleship is spending time with Jesus. Intimacy sits at the center of following Jesus. It is not the accomplishments or accolades which define discipleship but instead, it is the depth, passion, vulnerability and in-love-ness of relationship with Jesus making claim on a disciple's identity.

When one's identity and assignment become confused, the dream of that person's heart is diverted from the reality of relationship. Disciples never grow passed being with Jesus, they simply discover *more* is always available to them in authentic intimacy. Relationship then, is the foundation of one's sending. In other words, it is "being" that produces "doing." When a disciple attempts to authenticate their being through their doing, he/she often comes undone. It is vital that followers of Jesus understand all of their being has already be secured in what has been done by The One.

The third clear quality revealed in the text is discipleship is representative. At its core, to follow Jesus is to re-present Him on earth. John writes in the fourth chapter of his first letter saying, “As He is, so are we in this world” (John 4:17b, NASB). In other words, Jesus was to re-present the Father and Christians are to be the re-presentation of Him. Paul declares in his second letter to the Corinthians, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18, NASB). Paul continues a few chapters later saying, “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us” (2 Cor. 5:20a, NASB). To be like Jesus one must do the things He did and to do the things Jesus did he/she must operate with His authority. Jesus does not send disciples giving them a mission He is unwilling to accomplish through them. Rather, when the disciples were sent out, they were sent as an extension of the sender. As an extension of the sender, they were to declare and demonstrate the Kingdom He declared and demonstrated by the work of the same Holy Spirit in them. Both in the context of Mark 3 and in other texts, Jesus imparted authority to His followers through the Holy Spirit. This impartation would become the key to succession and succession, the key to sustaining the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. It is therefore, impartation and succession that equips followers of Jesus to be like Him.

Finally, is there a type of impartation and succession for the follower of Jesus today? Are disciples still called away to be with Him and in being with Him, sent out to the world around them. Are they sent still equipped to share the good news and, with authority, declare war on the forces of evil through a demonstration of the Spirit’s power? Did God really mean what He said as recorded in the book of Acts and the prophet Joel

saying, “I will pour forth My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophecy” (Acts 2:17-18, NASB). Or, as many would claim, did this type of discipleship die with the Twelve, leaving today’s Christian as impotent ambassadors with an irrelevant message and absentee authority? The purpose of this project is to determine if Jesus really was the best at discipleship and, if so, to determine if this form of discipleship is still available to His followers today?

## CHAPTER THREE

### HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. God Himself is not secure, having given man dominion over His works! Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold. Faith alone defends. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Adventure**

Defining adventure is no elementary charge. Wilfred Noyce, in introducing “The Springs of Adventure,” believed it best to eliminate the element of risk calling adventure, “a novel enterprise undertaken for its own sake.”<sup>2</sup> Noyce chose to define adventure outside of its traditionally understood connotation. For the purposes of this project, adventure will not be pursued for its own sake but rather for the opportunity it provides to encounter Jesus and become more like Him. Customarily, adventure has been defined by its elements of risk as “an unusual, exciting, and daring experience.”<sup>3</sup> Adventure produces a necessary vulnerability, often a prerequisite for change.

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<sup>1</sup> Hellen Keller, “Let Us Have Faith,” *Quote Investigator*, <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/11/21/adventure/>.

<sup>2</sup> Eric Leroy, “The Theory of Experiential Education,” *Adventure and Education* Spring 1983 (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1995), 446.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 76.

Regrettably, most appreciate adventure more theoretically than practically. Many idealize adventure but few aspire to find it. Adventure is difficult to quantify and describe because of its many and unique variables, perhaps most notably, the person engaged in the adventurous event. The thesis of the project suggests adventure is more related to the attitude of the heart and the expectancy of the spirit with which one approaches an experience. In that regard, what may qualify as an adventure for one may be an anxiety provoking for another. Either way, adventure becomes a meaningful ingredient in one's participation in the life of Christ.

Erick Leroy, who wrote on "Adventure and Education," believes the "twinkle in our own eyes should tell us this when we describe a forthcoming trip as an adventure."<sup>4</sup> Adventure is not a materialistic endeavor but rather a spiritual experience. In that light, Leroy proposes that adventure would cease to hold fascination if it did not have such a substantial element of the unknown. In other words, the unknown quality of adventure makes it an adventure. While Leroy asserts defining adventure may be untamable, he believes to have identified four characteristics common to all adventure: "difficulty, danger, commitment, and stress."<sup>5</sup> Leroy goes on to argue the necessity of each of these qualities as essential to the adventure experience. While these qualities contribute to the concept of adventure, they are not its definitive container. I contend Leroy and others think too narrowly about adventure, limiting it to an event. Adventure can be experienced more broadly and consistently as lifestyle. The most profound description of an adventurous lifestyle is found in the Gospel of John and is described by the Son of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Leroy, "The Theory of Experiential Education," 447.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Leroy, "The Theory of Experiential Education," 447.

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel (John 5:19–20, NASB).

Jesus' words capture the true nature of adventure more powerfully than any of the above definitions. By His definition, adventure is simply seeing what the Father is doing and joining Him in it. This transformative idea of adventure plays a key role in the most transformative form of learning: experiential education.

### *A Brief Epistemological History*

It is important to note any conversation about what experiential education is or its merits stem from a larger philosophical discussion centered on how one learns and the very nature of knowing. These issues are important to consider before one can properly understand the approach and intent of experientialists. April Crosby defines epistemology as "the study of how and what we know."<sup>6</sup> It deals with such questions as whether we know via our sense or our reason or some combination of the two. If potential exists to know by both reason and sense, through which avenue do people discover with more certainty? Crosby contends, "Epistemology is also concerned with the objects of knowledge: can we know only things which we can tangibly experience, like rocks and tables, or can we know that a non-tangible object, like love, or perhaps God, exists?"<sup>7</sup>

This discussion also engages two different types of knowing. Howard Gardner, an author and psychologist, called the first type "know-that" knowledge. The second type is

<sup>6</sup> April Crosby, "A Critical Look: The Philosophical Foundations of Experiential Education," *The Theory of Experiential Education* Spring 1981 (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1995): 4.

<sup>7</sup> April Crosby, "A Critical Look: The Philosophical Foundations of Experiential Education," 4.

called "know-how" knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Other names for this kind of knowledge include: "embodied knowledge," "high-context knowledge," "sensitive knowledge," or "situated knowledge."<sup>9</sup> Experiential educators often advocate the use of know-how knowledge by developing field trips and opportunities for direct involvement in activities. Clifford Knapp expresses, "These unmediated experiences, combined with a reflection or a processing element, could be called a transformation method of teaching because experiential educators help students take what happened to them and transform that experience into meaningful memories and applications for later use."<sup>10</sup> In this regard, epistemology is as much about distinguishing types of knowledge as how one discovers knowledge itself. In either case, the goal of experiential education is the transformation of the student.

Unfortunately, the epistemological conversation has often been argued from the extremes of rationalism or empiricism. A simpler and more balanced answer in this debate is to recognize the merits of both arguments and marry the two approaches rather than seeking to eliminate one in favor of the other. Still, the most common questions involved in the debate seem to be how one gains knowledge and what are the limits of knowledge? This project suggests a third, and perhaps, a more important question should be asked: How does the process of knowing change who a person is and what a person

<sup>8</sup> G. E. Knapp, *Lasting Lessons: A Teacher's Guide to Reflecting on Experience* (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearing House on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1992), 19.

<sup>9</sup> M. McKenzie, P. Hart, H. Bai, and B. Jickling (Eds.), *Fields of Green: Restoring Culture, Environment, and Education* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2009), 293.

<sup>10</sup> Clifford E. Knapp, "The 2009 Kurt Hahn Address: Seeking Deeper Understandings from Experiences," *Journal of Experiential Education* 33, no. 3 (2010): 277.

does? This question is foundational to adventure/experiential education and Christian discipleship.

Adding an additional epistemological perspective is relevant. A meaningful theological epistemology is shaped by the apostle John in his first epistle. The word “know” appears in John’s first epistle thirty-six times. In the letter, John answers the key questions of how one knows, what one knows, and how what one knows shapes who he/she is. John predominately uses two Greek words to describe two kinds of knowing. First, John uses the word γινώσκομεν, translated *we know* in the sense of, *perceive*. It was a knowing by experience, from day to day. This is distinguished from οἶδαμεν *we know*, expressing absolute, immediate knowledge of a fact once and for all, which is also frequently used in John’s letter.<sup>11</sup> John writes in the second chapter of his first epistle saying, “By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep His commands.” (1 John 2:3, NASB) In this text, knowing is represented experientially and represented by the knower’s actions. In fact, this expression of knowing, γινώσκομεν, is almost exclusively conveyed in John’s letter. This is an indication that what people know and what people do are intrinsically tied together. If the goal of education is transformation, whether in Christian or secular contexts, experience plays an invaluable role.

### **Experiential Learning**

Defining experiential learning, like adventure, can be a difficult task. One of the most notable reasons is the variety of terminology. Some refer to the term as experiential learning while others call it experiential education. Though those terms are often used

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<sup>11</sup> Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 326.

interchangeably, some distinguish between experiential learning and learning from experience. In differentiating between the terms, Norma Hedin states, “generally, experiential learning refers to the process of learning, while experiential education refers to programs or contexts that make use of experiential learning.”<sup>12</sup> In another attempt, Yount defines experiential learning as “active participation of learners in events or activities which leads to the accumulation of knowledge or skill”<sup>13</sup> and focuses on the educational attitudes related with experiential learning. Lewis and Williams assert, “In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing.”<sup>14</sup> Usher and Solomon suggest learning from experience as those experiences taking place in everyday life. In contrast, they see experiential learning as “a key element of discourse which constructs experiences in a particular way, as something from which knowledge can be derived through abstraction and by use of methodological approaches such as observation and reflection.”<sup>15</sup>

However experiential learning is defined, it is distinguished by the participatory nature of learning, as opposed to receiving and processing information alone. Proponents are emphatic that it is by doing and not by hearing alone that people learn best. In her investigations about the philosophical underpinnings of experiential education, Crosby argues, “those assumptions underlying experiential education are much more reliable

<sup>12</sup> Norma Hedin, “Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges,” *Christian Education Journal*, Series 3 Volume 7, Number 1 (2010): 108.

<sup>13</sup> W Yount, “Experiential Learning. In Anthony, M. (Ed.),” *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2001), 276.

<sup>14</sup> L Lewis and C Williams, *Experiential Learning: Past and Present*. In Jackson, L. & Caffarella, R. (Eds.). *Experiential Learning: A New Approach New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 62. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass 1994), 5.

<sup>15</sup> R Usher and N Solomon, “Experiential Learning and The Shaping of Subjective in the Workplace.” *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 31:2 (1999): 161.

than those underlying more traditional theories of education.”<sup>16</sup> It is this inductive form of discovery and reflection that is most transformative to the heart and the mind of the learner.

Lewis and Williams argue, “Experiential education differs from other learning approaches in that it provides an intentional process of experience and reflection about the experience in order to develop new knowledge or skills.”<sup>17</sup> Importance is placed on the unfolding of the participants’ subjective experiences and the meaning they develop from reflection on those experiences. In all of these methods, learning is experiential in the sense that “the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied . . . It involves direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter or only considering the possibility of doing something with it.”<sup>18</sup> In this way, experiential learning, by its nature, demands practice and application rather than developing safe and distant theories within its learners.

Through the processes of experience and reflection Menaker notes, “Learners revisit that thinking again and again as they experiment in new situations, modifying their thinking through the results of new experiences.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, our experiences shape our realities through fresh revelations but also demand we deal with previously held convictions in light of new understandings. Kolb’s fundamental idea contends, “Learning and knowing require both a grasp or figurative representation of experience and some

<sup>16</sup> April Crosby, “A Critical Look: The Philosophical Foundations of Experiential Education,” 4.

<sup>17</sup> L Lewis and C Williams, *Experiential Learning: Past and Present*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> M Keeton and P Tate (Eds). *Learning By Experience—What, Why, How.* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1978), 35.

<sup>19</sup> E Menaker, S Coleman, J Collins, and M Murawski, “Harnessing Experiential Learning Theory to Achieve War- Fighting Excellence”. Paper presented to the Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation & Education Conference, in Orlando, FL. (2006), 2.

transformation of that representation.”<sup>20</sup> Neither the figurative grasp nor operative transformation alone is adequate. Kolb argues, “The simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning; something must be done with it.”<sup>21</sup> In the same way, information alone cannot represent learning; for something must be changed, some experience that produces action.

April Cosby refers to the not so subtle shift of experiential education as it moves from placing importance on the teacher to placing importance on the student. Cosby states, “Learning will happen more effectively if the learner is as involved as possible, using as many of his faculties as possible, in the learning; and that this involvement is maximized if the student has something that matters to him at stake.”<sup>22</sup> It becomes a necessary shift in emphasis from what knowledge the teacher extends through information to what the student discovers through experience. Cosby goes on describing the process saying, “the learner-involved-in-immediate-experience is the object of knowledge, and the activity in, and reflection on, that involvement are the means of knowing.”<sup>23</sup> It should be noted here that learning in this way does not exclude elements of information through various means. Experiential learning simply emphasizes that transformative learning requires experience.

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<sup>20</sup> D. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 42.

<sup>21</sup> D. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development*, 42.

<sup>22</sup> April Crosby, “A Critical Look: The Philosophical Foundations of Experiential Education,” 5.

<sup>23</sup> April Crosby, “A Critical Look: The Philosophical Foundations of Experiential Education,” 5.

### *Developing Constructs of Experiential Learning*

As experiential education continues to come into the mainstream of education, there has been a greater emphasis placed on developing patterns and cycles depicting its processes. Menaker (2006) summarizes a brief experiential learning cycle as follows: “1.Experience or interact with the environment. 2. Observe behavior and reflect on experience. 3. Generalize or form abstract concepts based on reflection. 4. Experiment and add to or modify concepts based on new experience (p. 2).”<sup>24</sup> While this is not the definitive representation of experiential educational models, it is a good starting point to grasp practical elements involved in the approach. Laura Joplin proposes a five-stage model that was developed to provide an experiential action plan to teachers for their courses. The intent was to enable teachers to more deliberately design their courses and thus, increase the experiential nature of those designs. Joplin goes on to describe this cycle saying, “the five-stage model is organized around a central, hurricane-like cycle, which is illustrated, as challenging action. It is preceded by a focus and followed by a debriefing. Encompassing all is the environment of support and feedback.”<sup>25</sup> The five stages depict one complete cycle, where conclusion of the fifth stage is synchronized with the start of the first stage of the connecting cycle.

In 1984, David A. Kolb published *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, which outlines a cycle for reflection. The cycle begins with concrete experience, moves to reflective observation, then to abstract conceptualization, and finally to the application stage entailing active experimentation.

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<sup>24</sup> E. Menaker, S. Coleman, J. Collins, and M. Murawski, “Harnessing Experiential Learning Theory to Achieve War- Fighting Excellence,” 2.

<sup>25</sup> Laura Joplin, “On Defining Experiential Education,” *The Theory of Experiential Education* Spring 1981 (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1995): 23.

In addition, David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David Walker offered examples of various methods for promoting reflection including oral conversations, such as informal debriefing sessions following experiential activities and written responses to experiences.<sup>26</sup> Joplin goes on to include elements of experiential education that are key to developing processes for teachers and students. Some of these keys consistently used may include: student based rather than teacher based; personal not impersonal nature; process and product orientation; evaluation for internal and external reason; holistic understanding and component analysis; organized around experience; perception based rather than theory based; individual based rather than group based.<sup>27</sup>

Even with these broad definitions and varied processes, experiential education continues to be named and expressed in numerous ways in educational contexts. Some may not always use the term experiential education, but they clearly validate this style of learning. Experiential education is increasingly becoming part of a movement for educational reform including schools and other organizations involved in the helping professions. Unfortunately, western Christian contexts appear resistant to many of these approaches and instead, maintain a rather rigid grip on information as the predominant point of prospective impact for participants. One of the purposes of this project will be to create a Christian experiential learning model for the practical development of disciples.

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<sup>26</sup> David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker, eds. *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* (New York, NY: Kogan Page, 1985), 20.

<sup>27</sup> Laura Joplin, "On Defining Experiential Education," 24-26.

### *A Brief History of Adventure/Experiential Learning*

It is said that adventure/experiential education has its roots in the great philosophical teachers of Socrates and Plato, who taught by asking engaging and challenging questions. This style of teaching was in direct opposition to the teachers of the day who were known to teach students and have their learners recite aloud what they had been told. This approach is conceptualized as a pouring into the learner, whereas Socrates and Plato introduced a teaching style intended to draw out from the student. One cannot read the Gospels without seeing that Jesus taught through a combination of asking questions and telling stories intended to connect with listeners at a place of narrative discovery. In this way, teachers sought less to cover the material for their students and more to uncover it.

Again, it is important to remember the role of experience in education has a history that connects back to philosophical debates between rationalists and empiricists. German philosopher Immanuel Kant addressed this issue and seemingly resolved the debate by arguing that both rationality and experience have a place in the construction of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> While experiential learning/education has its roots in the teachers and philosophers dating back thousands of years, it was not a term that gained a name and place of prominence until much more recently.

Lewis and Williams indicated that during the 1980s and 1990s, experiential learning moved “from the periphery of education to the center.”<sup>29</sup> Cantor expressed that experiential learning was growing in popularity and practice in institutions of higher

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<sup>28</sup> “Experiential Education – Brief History of the Role of Experience in Education, Roles for the Teacher and the Student” accessed on December 8, 2013, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1963/Experiential-Education.html>.

<sup>29</sup> L. Lewis and C. Williams, *Experiential Learning: Past and Present*, 5.

education.<sup>30</sup> Experiential education, most generally, began to find its place in diverse kinds of curricula that had as its objective the production of knowledge, skills, and discoveries from direct experience. These environments included, but are not limited to, adventure education, environmental education, and practical short-term missions or internships.

Today, in an increasingly postmodern culture, experiential education continues to find places of increased prominence. As postmodernity reintroduces philosophies once thought solved by the enlightenment, there are new opportunities for transformative educational applications. While traditional churches are slow to evolve, some of the forerunning organizations in experiential education are Christian camps and conference/retreat centers. These locations provide both context and environment ideal for marrying information and experience toward life changing encounter.

### *Key Figures in Adventure/Experiential Learning*

David Kolb, a renowned experiential learning advocate who emphasizes the process of experiential learning, identifies John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget as the “foremost intellectual ancestors of experiential learning theory.”<sup>31</sup> Kolb also points to the influence of therapeutic psychologies based on psychoanalysis Carl Jung and Erik Erikson, as well as the radical educationists such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich.<sup>32</sup> John Dewey (1859–1952), perhaps the most prominent American philosopher of the early

<sup>30</sup> J. Cantor, “Experiential Learning in Higher Education: Linking Classroom and Community.” *ASHE-Eric Higher Education Report*, no. 7. Washington D. C. (1995): 5.

<sup>31</sup> D. Kolb, *Experiential learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Norma Hedin, “Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges,” 110.

twentieth century, expanded on the relationship between experience and learning in the publication of his well-known book, *Experience and Education*. He argued that not all experience is educative, noting: “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative.”<sup>33</sup> The work of field theorist Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), made tremendous contributions to experiential learning theory in group dynamics in American social psychology and the subsequent influence on the field of organizational behavior.<sup>34</sup> Genetic epistemologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980), and educator and activist Paulo Freire (1921–1997) also provide theoretical grounding for experiential education.

### **Kurt Hahn**

Kurt Hahn once said, "It is a sin of soul to force young people into opinions—indoctrination is of the devil—but it is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences"<sup>35</sup> Hahn was a German politician and progressive educator of Jewish origin who later became a Christian and citizen of England. Hahn was known for his generosity, vision, and determination. He was, at times, demanding, overbearing and unwavering in the development and implementation of new and innovative educational practices. Today, he is considered by many the father of modern experiential education. Hahn's distinctive brilliance, however, lay in the unique selection and mixture of the philosophies that he selected. This capacity to create, along with Hahn's captivating energy and ability to

<sup>33</sup> Norma Hedin, “Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges,” 110.

<sup>34</sup> Norma Hedin, “Experiential Learning: Theory and Challenges,” 110.

<sup>35</sup> Kurt Hahn, Harrogate address on Outward Bound: Address by Dr. Kurt Hahn at the conference at Harrogate, 9 May 1965. Retrieved from <http://www.KurtHahn.org>, 3.

influence others, would become the catalyst that put his ideas into action. Although he was twenty-eight years old and had never taught in a school he created one. In some way, his being outside the modern educational system allowed him to think with great imagination and inspiration about what education could become. Hahn envisioned a system that welcomed powerful emotions, such as awe, fear, and jubilant conquest. Hahn desired to do more than educate a mind, but transform the whole person through life altering experiences. Thompson mused, "Part of his lifelong aspiration, part of the whole he sought through programs like Outward Bound, was that the experience accessible to any human being, at any level of ability, could be charged with joy and wonder in the doing."<sup>36</sup>

### *Outward Bound*

Hahn would go on to launch Outward Bound, in Wales, in 1941, and Atlantic College, in England, in 1962.<sup>37</sup> It was imported to the United States two decades later; Outward Bound, in turn, became a moving spirit of the experiential education movement.<sup>38</sup> Sir George Trevelyan commented during the christening of the Aberdovey Outward Bound School's first schooner that, "If youth ever loses the thirst for adventure, any civilization, however enlightened, and any state, however well ordered, must wither and dry up."<sup>39</sup> In many ways, Outward Bound epitomized the educational expression of

<sup>36</sup> James Thompson, "Sketch of a Moving Spirit Spring," *The Theory of Experiential Education* Spring 1980 (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1995): 93.

<sup>37</sup> James Thompson, "Sketch of a Moving Spirit Spring," 86.

<sup>38</sup> James Thompson, "Sketch of a Moving Spirit Spring," 85.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Leroy, "The Theory of Experiential Education," 434.

experience and adventure that burned in Hahn's heart. Adventure is an intentional initiative. Adventure creates opportunities for breakthrough that cannot be provided by superficial, generic technological life. It has the capacity to create community among strangers and deepen awareness of one's self and creator. It is capable of equipping in ways that little else can accomplish. Thompson expressed that Hahn "believed that education should cultivate a passion for life and that this can be accomplished only through experience, a shared sense of moment in the journey toward an exciting goal."<sup>40</sup> Hahn understood that Outward Bound, as an isolated event, would be a feeble attempt, at best, to change a life. Hahn reflected, "The inspiration received at Outward Bound is apt to evaporate, leaving no trace on future conduct, unless the Outward Bounders, in their normal surroundings, will translate it into action, in other words, unless they seek and find opportunities for a demanding active service of use to their fellow men."<sup>41</sup> This reflection addresses the major concern of event education, whether traditional or experiential.

For true and lasting change to occur, there must be some form of follow-up. The true challenge of adventure/experiential education is to find meaningful avenues for the participant to practice what they have experienced in their own daily contexts. Without follow-up, the learner often has a mountaintop experience that has momentary meaning, but no long-term inherent value. In this way, even adventure/experiential education is not meant to stand alone. Hahn expressed this saying, "The Outward Bound experience by itself does not go deep enough. It is the beginning of a great promise – but this promise

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<sup>40</sup> James Thompson, "Sketch of a Moving Spirit Spring," 93.

<sup>41</sup> Kurt Hahn, "Harrogate Address on Outward Bound," 6.

will not be fulfilled unless the follow-up problem is solved.”<sup>42</sup> In other words, while experience can pierce the darkness, it does not necessarily dictate that the learner will, thereafter, consistently walk in the light. Kurt Hahn sums this idea up well saying, “Outward Bound can ignite – that is all – it is for others to keep the flame alive.”<sup>43</sup>

### *Educational Philosophies*

Hahn believed in education's ability to draw out and develop the deepest qualities of character and compassion. Hahn believed the foremost task of education was to “ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion.”<sup>44</sup> Hahn recognized the need for real, hands-on, practical challenges for the development of character. He contended these experiences, which developed knowledge and understanding, would extend past the classroom and into the realm of life. It was his desire to create educational systems and opportunities that would engage the whole person so that the whole person might be developed to its full capacity. In this way, Hahn’s desire for education went far beyond what many think of as self-discovery. While this was an essential element of Hahn’s concept of experiential education, it was more a means than an end. Hahn’s purpose was to clearly connect his students to something beyond themselves. Of course, this should be understood in the framework of Hahn’s

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<sup>42</sup> Kurt Hahn, “Harrogate Address on Outward Bound,” 11.

<sup>43</sup> Kurt Hahn, “Harrogate Address on Outward Bound,” 9.

<sup>44</sup> Kurt Hahn. (accessed September 1, 2013). <http://www.kurthahn.org/quotes/quote2.html>.

"incurable optimism about human nature, but especially human nature in the young, for the young were still being formed."<sup>45</sup>

Though Jewish by birth, Hahn became fascinated by the Gospel of Matthew. This fascination would prove influential, and Hahn is on written record as having contemplated conversion in the 1930s. Feeling that this was not the time to abandon his fellow Jews, Hahn waited till 1945 when he finally joined the Anglican Church. Sutcliffe recalls, "Years later, on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1972, he was baptized in his German home at Hermannsberg, by Bishop Lancelot Fleming. Hahn had identified himself, since the 1930s, with the Church of England and the Episcopal Church of Scotland."<sup>46</sup> Hahn's faith played a significant underlying role in his educational philosophy and practice. For instance, while Hahn expressed that organizations, such as Outward Bound, was neutral in regard to religion, it was not indifferent to it. He went on saying, "The Christian inspiration of the whole enterprise is freely acknowledged."<sup>47</sup> This statement alludes to a much larger issue, which is central to the purpose of this paper.

### **Experiential Application**

This entire secular historical section is intended to paint a persuasive picture concerning the importance of experience in any transformative endeavor. Therefore, the above historical accounts, though mostly secular, provide valuable insight and inspiration into available processes largely ignored in western Christian contexts. This project seeks

<sup>45</sup> David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges and Other Founding Figures* (David Sutcliffe, 2013), 112.

<sup>46</sup> David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges and Other Founding Figures*, 113.

<sup>47</sup> David Sutcliffe, *Kurt Hahn and the United World Colleges and Other Founding Figures*, 117.

to prove the intrinsic importance of practical experience necessary for lives to be changed. Therefore, innovative experiential processes should be applied in Christian discipleship if, in fact, its goal is transformation.

### **Christian Experience**

But whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:16-18, NASB).

### **The Reformation of the Reformation**

The intrinsic value of experience is not limited to education. Rather, any endeavor that seeks radical change is rooted in transformative encounter. Certainly, the whole of Christian history expresses the importance of experience. Still, as the pendulum swings from one extreme to the other, so does the ever-changing balance of emphasis between intellectualism and experientialism. For the purpose of this research, reflection will begin with one of the most profound swings in history—the Reformation.

In 1517, an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther sparked a reformation with the swing of a hammer. The Ninety-Five Theses nailed to the door of the Wittenberg church addressed the exploitations of Catholicism, such as unction and indulgences. The Reformation leaders also addressed Catholic claim to legitimate doctrine supported by so-called miracles. In an attempt to dispute these doctrines, the Reformers also discredited the miraculous, thus marking a move from faith in the supernatural expression of God to an intellectual assent reached by reason. The Reformers zeal to discredit

Catholicism unfortunately disregarded fifteen hundred years of miracles, signs, and wonders. This move would eventually produce *The Age of Reason* also known as The Enlightenment. In The Enlightenment rationality would rule the day and belief would be based on scientific knowledge. This would leave little room for any theology embracing the miraculous power of God. Therefore, an experience of God was looked down upon and considered anti-intellectual. John Ruthven summarizes it well:

The Enlightenment formalized human wisdom into a “scientific method” that could discover all reliable knowledge. Today among conservative Protestants, you hear this Enlightenment solution applied to charismatic or prophetic confusion by saying, “I don’t rely on experience but on the facts of Scripture.” Trouble is, this statement has a huge problem: Experience (directly hearing the voice of God) is probably the biggest fact that Scripture emphasizes. The human tendency to take refuge from this fact in seeking to substitute a knowledge of God with a knowledge of Scripture ends up being completely circular—since the emphasis of Scripture itself ironically leads back to the centrality of God’s voice!<sup>48</sup>

The *Age of Reason* would reduce Christianity to something entirely too reasonable. Its Reformation roots, which were attempting to produce balance, actually created a religious system dedicated to doctrine at the expense of experience. Still, though these voices loomed loudly, there were others who had an equally powerful influence and grew directly from the Reformation. This movement is known as Pietism.

### *Pietism*

Pietism is a post-Reformation reform movement that called for faith and practice to be consistently conveyed in the experience and expression of a Christian’s life. The movement’s historical significance is often either applauded or appalled. Karl Barth is credited on one occasion with the statement, "Better with the Church in hell than with

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<sup>48</sup> Ruthven, *What's Wrong MS*, 58.

pietists—of higher or lower type—in a heaven which does not exist.<sup>49</sup> While Barth and others oppose Pietism, others like F. Ernest Stoeffer advocate for its positive place in history. Stoeffer expresses Pietism was the “single most dynamic movement within Protestantism.”<sup>50</sup> According to Dale Brown, protagonist historians have credited Pietism with “fostering some of the good ingredients of the Enlightenment, German Idealism, Romanticism, the Great Awakening, revivalism, and many new denominations.”<sup>51</sup> While varying opinions persist concerning Pietism’s historical contributions, its continuing contribution to western religious thought, particularly in the realm of spiritual experience, is clear. Yet, to truly appreciate Pietism, it is necessary to look more closely into its religious and historical birthplace.

One key factor in the movement’s religious environment was the dramatic effects of the Thirty Year War, a devastating fight that began in 1618 with the Defenestration of Prague and concluded in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). This war, according to Mark H. Heinemann, “exacerbated the conflicts between the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed political-religious groups in Europe.” Besides the carnage, Brown describes the consequences of this war as, “religiously divisive, morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, and ultimately futile in its results.”<sup>52</sup> Certainly, the impact this war had on the church cannot be overestimated.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth Collins, “John Wesley’s Critical Appropriation of Early German Pietism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 27 no. 1-2 (Spring - Fall 1992): 57.

<sup>50</sup> Wallace B. Landes, Jr., “Radical Pietism and Contemporary Religious Experience,” *Brethren Life and Thought*, 43 no. 3-4 (Sum - Fall 1998): 12.

<sup>51</sup> Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Collins, “John Wesley’s Critical Appropriation of Early German Pietism,” 59.

Another key dynamic sparking Pietism was the controlling and lifeless dogma resulting from the Reformation and Lutheranism. Stoeffler (1965) writes, “Out of this struggle for ‘true’ Lutheranism came . . . the rigid confessionalizing of Lutheranism which was undertaken by its seventeenth century theologians. The result was an unprecedented hardening of Lutheran doctrine.”<sup>53</sup> This rigidity created an atmosphere consumed by a series of rationally ordered presuppositions, which became the essence of Christian life. This fashioned a theological anchor grounded in right doctrine, which increasingly moved away from the need for life application or spiritual formation. Heinemann contends, “Lutheran pastors and theologians spent too much time disputing with rival confessions, and that as a consequence, the care and feeding of the church was being neglected, not to mention its unity.”<sup>54</sup> These circumstances led to an overt orthodoxy with a sterile and impersonal religious application. Fractured and frustrated, the church, particularly the Reformation leaders, held tightly to the one area they could control—doctrine. It was in this Christian and cultural climate that Pietism, an innovative and influential movement, arose.

Pietism’s far-reaching influence was representative of its radical shift from the legalistic rhetoric of the Reformation. The four predominate positions of Pietism, according to Wallace B. Landes, included: “(1) reformation of the church, with particular focus on lay participation; (2) emphasis on the Scriptures as the basis/means for reformation; (3) reformation of life/“orthopraxis” or “right living” through regeneration; and (4) a theology of experience, featuring motifs of repentance, new birth,

<sup>53</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, “Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator,” *Christian Education Journal*, 3d ser 1, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 101.

<sup>54</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, “Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator,” 102.

conversion.”<sup>55</sup> The key foundational teaching connecting each of these four areas was a deep abiding belief that faith must be an experiential expression rather than simply an intellectual assent. It was not enough to know doctrine and successfully argue ideas, but rather, without the transforming experience and application of what was known, right understanding was impotent and inauspicious. Still, in order to become an influential movement, Pietism would need influential leaders.

### *Philip Jakob Spener*

Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705), often called a second Luther and the Father of Pietism, furthered a movement that would be known as a religion of the heart. Spener was a leader in what many call a second reformation and believed the Lutheranism of his day was dominated by a cold rationalism, and an “empty drive for unnecessary knowledge.”<sup>56</sup> Deeter believes Spener and the leaders of the Pietist movement wrote with an “earnestness in struggling against every empty, dead form of a merely external, customary, conventional Christianity. Instead, these writers are grasped by a Christianity that is an all-pervading power which determines every aspect of life.”<sup>57</sup> Among many other tenants, Spener argued for a necessary experience of the Word that would influence and infiltrate every aspect of the believer’s life. It was this kind of personal experiential application that would spark broad necessary institutional reform. Spener’s significant work, the *Pia Desideria*, according to Frank Roberts, “shook the German Lutheran

<sup>55</sup> Wallace B. Landes, Jr., “Radical Pietism and Contemporary Religious Experience,” 14.

<sup>56</sup> Frank Roberts, “Gottfried Arnold on Historical Understanding: An Early Pietist Approach,” *Fides et Historia*, 14, no. 2 (Spring - Sum 1982): 50.

<sup>57</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, “Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator,” 99.

Church to its foundations with its appeal for reform, and with its attacks on Lutheran Orthodoxy.”<sup>58</sup> *Pia Desideria* clearly detailed the intentions and foundational beliefs of Pietism. The book both honored Luther and Lutheranism, while expressing an uncompromising need for ecclesiological and academic reform.

Spener, like the educational reformers mentioned throughout this chapter, was an academic innovator. Mark H. Heinemann expresses, “Spener’s life work can be seen as a case study in the practice of educational ministry and church renewal.”<sup>59</sup> In *Pia Desideria*, Spener critiques the unchristian academic life prevalent in many schools and universities but affirms the potential for reform—that they would “be recognized from the outward life of the students to be nurseries of the church for all estates and as workshops of the Holy Spirit”<sup>60</sup> Spener believed that professors should firstly disciple students in the faith because academic achievement was useless without personal piety. In this way, Spener was a proponent of experience as it produced radically changed lives. It was not that Spener was a sensationalist seeking experience for its own sake. Baird Tipson furthers this point saying, “The vividness of the experience was far less important to Spener than the new relationship with God that resulted from it.”<sup>61</sup> Understanding experience in this way is vital. Experience in this case, is encountering God in such a way that one is changed. It is not the experience itself that should be celebrated but its resulting fruit. If

<sup>58</sup> Frank Roberts, “Gottfried Arnold on Historical Understanding: An Early Pietist Approach,” 51.

<sup>59</sup> Mark H. Heinemann, “Philip Jakob Spener: Educational Ministry Innovator,” 102.

<sup>60</sup> James Riley Estep Jr., “Scripture and Spiritual Formation in the German Pietist Tradition,” *Christian Education Journal*, 3d ser. 9 (Spr 2012): 104.

<sup>61</sup> Baird Tipson, “How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 43, no. 4 (Dec 1975): 703.

transformation does not occur, the experience proves as dead as the dogma. It was Spener's successor Francke, who perhaps displayed this truth most profoundly.

*August Hermann Francke*

August Hermann Francke, a great Pietist leader, quite personally valued transformation resulting from profound experience and encounter. Though Francke frequently went to church, confession, and communion he lacked the power and depth in his relationship with God to, in his own words, "deny my ungodly existence and worldly lusts and to live chastely, uprightly, and in a godly manner, not only outwardly but also inwardly. My theology I held in my head and not in my heart; it was dead science rather than living knowledge"<sup>62</sup> The divided heart and superficial reality of Francke's religious experience left him in such despair that he doubted God's existence. Still, the inconceivable consequence of atheism would become the catalyst that positioned Francke for life changing encounter. Francke describes the result of his encounter with the Christ saying, "I cannot express it more briefly than by saying that before sin reigned over me, afterwards however the power of Christ dwelt in me, which is the real difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate, which no one understands but one who has received the Spirit of God."<sup>63</sup> Baird Tipson continues recounting Francke's testimony saying, "It was as if he had been all his life in a deep sleep and had acted as if in a dream; now for the first time he was awake. His reason was now subordinated to faith; he found it easy to deny worldly desires; he saw clearly how different "the world" was from the children of

<sup>62</sup> Baird Tipson, "How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism," 705.

<sup>63</sup> Baird Tipson, "How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism," 706.

God.”<sup>64</sup> Francke had become the living expression of transformative experience that has the potential to forever change a person in a single moment.

Unfortunately, reformation movements are often born in reaction to existing issues. Frequently these reforms overcompensate and one extreme is followed by another. While over emphasizing the experiential could lead to subjectivism, Pietism’s belief of the centrality of the Bible as an experiential, not simply intellectual, tool kept them from moving away from the practical influence of Scripture for Christian living. Thus, biblical prominence balanced the movement’s experiential emphasis. Pietism was the center point between the orthodox of Lutheranism and the subjectivism of the Mystics. Pietism recognized that Bible study was key to spiritual formation when it was understood as something to be implemented, not simply acknowledged academically. James Riley Estep Jr. contends, “Contemporary spiritual formation must embrace biblical metaphor that can be explored not only academically but personally. Scripture holds Pietism together, theology and experience in balance; like the knot of a bowtie.”<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that doctrine and experience were also held together by the necessity of the Spirit in Pietistic thought.

Central to Scriptural understanding was the illumination that resulted from the power of the Holy Spirit as the word was pressed into the heart. This illumination produced what Spener referred to as “living or practical knowledge, because the will, too,

<sup>64</sup> Baird Tipson, “How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism,” 706.

<sup>65</sup> James Riley Estep Jr., “Scripture and Spiritual Formation in the German Pietist Tradition,” 106-107.

had been empowered by the Spirit, it desired and grasped what the intellect knew.”<sup>66</sup>

Baird Tipson argues, “Had the Spirit confined his illuminating work to the intellect alone, even scriptural truth could well have remained austere and unappealing, not so when the heart was directly inflamed.”<sup>67</sup> Again, it is clear that information alone does not produce the fruit of transformation but is dependent upon the Spirit to enhance a person’s understanding of the word through an experience of it. Only then, when word becomes flesh, is the application of experience understood in the way it is expressed in life. This theology, combining mind and heart, would prove a powerful influence for contemporary and future movements.

### **Moravians, Methodists and the Great Awakening**

Pietism was particularly important to both the Moravian and Methodist movements. Ted A. Campbell argues, “The Moravian and Methodist movements were both influenced by the “religion of the heart,” a widespread movement for affective devotion in the period following the European wars of religion in the 1600s.”<sup>68</sup> These sister movements, though influenced by Spener, Francke and others, would quickly become the much bigger sister. Campbell continues by recounting three predominate characteristics of Pietism that marked the Moravian and Methodist traditions. The first of these is of particular interest here. Campbell contends Pietism’s dramatic impact was in

<sup>66</sup> Baird Tipson, “How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism,” 702.

<sup>67</sup> Baird Tipson, “How Can the Religious Experience of the Past Be Recovered? The Examples of Puritanism and Pietism,” 702.

<sup>68</sup> Ted A. Campbell, “Close Encounters of the Pietistic Kind: The Moravian-Methodist Connection,” *Communio Viatorum*, 45 no 1 (2003): 80.

insisting “Christian faith involves more than mere doctrinal assent: it involves heartfelt repentance and heartfelt faith in Christ.”<sup>69</sup> Again, it was the foundational belief that faith move beyond right thinking and be experienced thus expressing itself in the transformation of one’s life.

Dale W. Brown, in regards to Pietism and Methodism, believes, “both movements avoided doctrinal indifference at the same time it was stressed that doctrine be translated into life. Spener and Wesley stressed that works, joy, and emotions were the fruit of faith rather than the way to salvation.”<sup>70</sup> Still, Wesley's experience at Aldersgate had an enormous influence in launching his public ministry. Ironically, as Brown observes, it was “Moravian Pietists who before and after this event admonished, guided and inspired Wesley through four soul searching and personally redemptive years.”<sup>71</sup>

Due to this powerfully transformative encounter, the potential for experience was crucial to Wesley's practical theology when balanced by its affirmation of the Word. Laurence W. Wood expresses, “Wesley believed ‘experience’ must confirm the doctrines of Scripture; otherwise, he said he would be convinced that he had misunderstood the Scriptures.”<sup>72</sup> Brown continues, “Experience was emphasized as a receptive medium rather than the productive source of revelation.”<sup>73</sup> In other words, experience alone was

<sup>69</sup> Ted A. Campbell, “Close Encounters of the Pietistic Kind: The Moravian-Methodist Connection,” 70.

<sup>70</sup> Dale W. Brown, “The Wesleyan Revival from a Pietist Perspective,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 24 (1989): 11.

<sup>71</sup> Dale W. Brown, “The Wesleyan Revival from a Pietist Perspective,” 8.

<sup>72</sup> Laurence W. Wood, “The Origin, Development, and Consistency of John Wesley's Theology of Holiness,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 43, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 53.

<sup>73</sup> Dale W. Brown, “The Wesleyan Revival from a Pietist Perspective,” 11.

as empty as information without implementation. Experience was always purposed to produce change.

Jonathan Edwards, often referred to as "the theologian of religious experience,"<sup>74</sup> was also touched by Pietism's emphasis on experience. Edwards, like Spener, Francke and Wesley, did not separate emotions from the intellect. Rather, Edwards recognized the interdependence of understanding and emotion saying, "There must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart."<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Edwards connected the mind and the heart together as partners rather than opponents in experiential transformation. Still, Edwards, like those who had come before him, recognized the limitations of intellectual ascent to information alone. Edwards contended, "Religion is not confined to the realm of the mind or the lair of dispassionate knowledge, but singularly embraces the affective side of man; true religion does not consist in dry orthodoxy!"<sup>76</sup> Thus, instead of stressing the centrality of the mind and the rational faculties, Edwards elevated the role of experience. G. Chevreau's conclusion is Edwards' passion for "practical and vital Christianity/religious knowledge as experience, held not in the head but in the heart."<sup>77</sup>

Chevreau continues citing a passage that clearly depicts Edwards' perspective: "Now, if such things are enthusiasm, and the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain

<sup>74</sup> John D. Hannah, "Jonathon Edwards, The Toronto Blessing, and The Spiritual Gifts: Are the Extraordinary Ones Actually the Ordinary Ones?" *Trinitarian Journal*, 17NS (1996): 175.

<sup>75</sup> John D. Hannah, "Jonathon Edwards, The Toronto Blessing, and The Spiritual Gifts: Are the Extraordinary Ones Actually the Ordinary Ones?" 171.

<sup>76</sup> John D. Hannah, "Jonathon Edwards, The Toronto Blessing, and The Spiritual Gifts: Are the Extraordinary Ones Actually the Ordinary Ones?" 171.

<sup>77</sup> G. Chevreau, *Catch The Fire: The Toronto Blessing, An Experience of Renewal and Revival* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994), 29.

be evermore possessed of that happy distemper! If this be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be all seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, glorious distraction!”<sup>78</sup> Also, like Spener, Francke and Wesley, Edwards recognized the experience of God as what moved one toward transformation and the emotional response to experience as the result of authentic conversion. It appears Edwards viewed the emotional mayhem in the Awakening as secondary to the authentic fruit resulting from God’s work of conversion.

In the end, each of these leaders appreciated experience as it related to transformation. Each movement moved away from an intellectualized and impotent faith and celebrated faith, which displayed itself implemented in lives. Each of these leaders and movements believed in the centrality of Scripture and the Holy Spirit’s witnessing power to reveal truth and breathe life. The lasting contribution of these daring adventurers is most profoundly displayed in the context of true discipleship. These leaders were willing to struggle against the status quo and demand discipleship mean more than right thinking and elegant argument. They knew that discipleship, at its core, was an experiential adventure in intimate relationship with Jesus that would result in dramatic life change. In this regard, there was not an emphasis on experience for experience sake, but rather, how certain experiences resulted in a life that looked ever increasingly more like Jesus. This is the heart of discipleship – “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17, NASB).

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<sup>78</sup> G. Chevreau, *Catch The Fire: The Toronto Blessing, An Experience of Renewal and Revival*, 30.

## Conclusion

It is of utmost importance to determine the place of experiential education in Christian settings as a legitimate context for supernatural encounter and the resulting transformation of disciples into the likeness of Jesus. The approach to theological education in churches and higher educational Christian institutions has been “the faithful and efficient transmission of a body of knowledge from the professor to the student.”<sup>79</sup> The approach suggests right information produces right understanding, which, in turn, achieves right thinking and a changed life. Unfortunately, in most cases, the practical application of information is not addressed during the teaching time, nor is there an avenue of expression or discovery fostered outside of the classroom. Simply put, most Christian education, whether done in our sanctuaries or classrooms, has been almost entirely informational.

Limiting the Christian experience to information is a vast reduction of what is consistently observed in Scripture. Transformation most dramatically and enduringly occurs as the result of supernatural experience and encounter. In other words, information about Jesus changes little, but meeting the person of Jesus changes everything. It is therefore, in the intimacy of relationship with the person of Jesus that believers discover their identity and destiny, which releases them to true discipleship—to live like Jesus. Consequently, an intentional and relentless pursuit to develop contexts that create opportunity for participants to experience the supernatural with transformation in mind is necessary. This project proposes there is no greater adventure than becoming

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<sup>79</sup> Timothy Brock, “Adventures in Theological Education,” *Review and Expositor*, 102 (Spring 2005): 209.

like Jesus. Therefore, the heart of discipleship is a persistent pursuit of intimacy with Jesus and radical willingness to risk doing what Jesus did.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and *to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge*, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.  
(Ephesians 3:14-19, NASB)

#### **Epistemology**

The central subject of the Christian faith is epistemology – how does a person know what they know? Dr. Jon Ruthven believes that epistemological understanding sits at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian. Ruthven argues that “the central story of Scripture is the issue of first, how we know something is true, and second, what one does about it.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the object of faith must be recognizable truth and as truth, action must be taken. It is the process of turning what we know about God into knowing God. Still, an additional and foundational question exists past knowing truth and acting on it. This question pursues the transformative results of truth. How does what one recognizes and practices as truth change the believer’s life?

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Mark Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 247.

*A Biblical Epistemology*

The apostle Paul addresses basic epistemological ideologies in his writing to the Romans and Corinthians. Paul differentiates the intellectual knowing God with the actions and fruit of knowing God in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans saying, “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:21-22, NASB). Paul points out that knowledge of God is worthless and futile when it lacks participation and transformation. Theoretical knowledge is dangerous for it gives the illusion of wisdom, but results in foolishness because there is no change in actions or behavior.

Paul deepens this epistemological theology in his writing to the church in Corinth. Paul points out that the message of the cross is “foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18, NASB). Paul introduces the idea of foolishness to expose the alleged wisdom of the world as he demands, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Cor. 1:18, NASB). The heart of this passage is epistemological exposing humankind’s attempt to become wise, thus forfeiting the simple, powerful and transformative truth of Christ Jesus “who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:20, NASB). Paul goes on to place the theological icing on the epistemological cake saying, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Cor. 1:30, NASB). It is not in the wise declaration, but,

rather, the powerful demonstration that becomes the resting place of the believer's faith. Therefore, an encounter with the Spirit of God becomes the foundational epistemology for those who know Jesus experientially, not simply academically.

Paul further differentiates between two kinds of wisdom/knowledge. One kind of wisdom is of the world, which he refers to as of this age and again as human wisdom. The other kind of wisdom is secret wisdom, which is revealed by the Spirit. Paul continues declaring, "No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand/know what God has freely given us" (1 Cor. 2:11b-12, NASB). Paul goes on to assert that without the Spirit of God a person cannot accept the things that come from God because they will appear foolish because the Spirit expresses spiritual truths in spiritual words. The revelation from the Holy Spirit within the believer becomes the source of truth and the enabler of understanding. Hildegard of Bingen, known for her visions and wisdom, poetically describes the Holy Spirit speaking as "breezes blow" and as "the source of human understanding . . . the breath of wisdom."<sup>2</sup> It is a profoundly powerful pneumatological epistemology in which the Holy Spirit is the initiator and illuminator of true knowledge and understanding.

Still, wise scholars and philosophers throughout the ages have staked their claims about proper theological epistemology. These ideas and approaches have created sects and schisms in the church throughout Christian history. These ideologies are broad and often reactive in nature. The purpose of this chapter is to concisely explore the epistemological theologies of Gnosticism, rationalism, cessationism, existentialism,

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Inc., 1997), cited in Randall Harris, *The Contemporaries Meet the Classics on the Holy Spirit* (West Monroe, LA: Howard, 2004), 48.

phenomenology, and then return to what I consider is a biblical epistemology with a deeply pneumatological perspective. These epistemological perspectives play a major role in how we think about and practice discipleship.

### **Gnosticism**

Gnosticism is a term derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, or knowledge. As a term relating directly to the ideology of epistemology, it had a tremendous effect on Christian thought and is considered heresy. Gnosticism is distinguished by claims of mystical knowledge and emphasizes information over faith. Gnosticism is considered the natural outgrowth of the failure of rationalistic Greek philosophy. Christianity offered a new methodology of joining ethical teaching and spiritual power. Paul King highlights gnostic optimism toward “dualism, sensory denial, perfect knowledge of God and transcending human limitations.”<sup>3</sup> This dualism was idealized to the gnostic thinker as represented in the person of Jesus who carried with Him the promise of perfection. Gnostics believed a separation must be made between body and intellectual ascent. While flesh was inherently evil, a person’s salvation was dependent upon knowledge through means of superior revelation. Upon this foundation the gnostics found Jesus, who contained perfection in both senses, to be so fascinating. Paul Kramer indicates this idealism was because “Jesus was both perfect man and perfect God.”<sup>4</sup>

Still, gnostic rationalism could not accept the divinity of Jesus as an object of faith, but rather objectified Him as a representation of a philosophical epistemology. To

<sup>3</sup> Paul L. King, *Only Believe: Examining the Origin and Development of Classic and Contemporary Word of Faith Theologies* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit, 2008), 214.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Stevens Kramer, “The Place of Gnosticism within the History of Christian Thought,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 16, no. 4 (Oct 1934): 286.

make a subjective jump to a faith conclusion about a person as savior would undermine their basic philosophy that knowledge, not a person, was power. For the gnostic, this possession of knowledge “was the most important element necessary for a perfect life of happiness, and a guarantee of everlasting bliss.”<sup>5</sup> The great error in this reasoning was the implicit limitation created by its own idealistic ideology. Philosophy reigned over faith and principles trumped personhood. Gnostic devotion to the concept of reason, as it stood on its own, was doomed because it lacked the catalytic quality, which produces transformation–relationship.

### Rationalism

Rationalists claim that it is reason that separates man from beast and is the supreme identifier that makes humankind unmistakably made in the image of God. Owen C. Thomas argues eighteenth century enlightenment was rooted in “the Golden Age of Western cultural history, namely, the Athens of the sixth to fourth centuries BCE in which, it is affirmed, all the great achievements of the modern Western world had their foundation.”<sup>6</sup> This was closely associated with the philosophical underpinnings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The Golden Age eventually gave birth to the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but culminated in the Enlightenment. Thomas claims “the Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was dominated by the ideas of reason and nature and by the philosophy of rationalism, the view that reason is

<sup>5</sup> Paul Stevens Kramer, “The Place of Gnosticism within the History of Christian Thought,” 294.

<sup>6</sup> Owen C. Thomas, “The Origins of Modernity: An Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 91, no. 2 (Spr 2009): 236.

the only way to truth in all realms.”<sup>7</sup> The Modern era is marked by the thought that through the power of reason humankind would gain an unstoppable momentous progress in the fields of technology, science and education. John Randall argues, “the leaders of the Enlightenment believed in the perfectibility of the human race.”<sup>8</sup>

Just as Platonism deeply impacted the theologies of Clement, Origen and Augustine, modern rationalism has profoundly influenced contemporary Christian thought. Friedrich Nietzsche contends, “Christianity is Platonism for ‘the people.’”<sup>9</sup> This implies Christian faith is a dumbed down Platonic philosophy. As calloused as Nietzsche’s comments appear, they are warranted in the light of Enlightened Christian rationalism. Rationalism has popularized a kind of moral deism and proposes the whole of the Christian faith is an intellectual ascent toward a pragmatic and self-centered knowledge. This reduces discipleship to a moralism resulting in the believer’s behavior being just a little better than those who do not know Jesus. Modern rationalists have become theorists who shrink back from the proposition of experiencing the things they claim to understand. Albert Mollegen contends, “The Christian cultural man . . . needs no revelation, no divine influence, in order to become what he is; he needs only his own

<sup>7</sup> Owen C. Thomas, “The Origins of Modernity: An Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History,” 239.

<sup>8</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age*, revised edition (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1940), 254, quoted in Owen C. Thomas, “The Origins of Modernity: An Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 91, no. 2 Spr (2009): 239.

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York, NY: Random House, 1966), 3, quoted in Owen C. Thomas, “The Origins of Modernity: An Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 91, no. 2 Spr (2009): 242.

reason, his own nature, and the nature of the universe, clearly perceptible to his own reason.”<sup>10</sup>

Not all rationalists deny the idea of Christian revelation. Jonathan Mayhew did not deny the idea of revelation, but conceived of it in a highly rationalistic fashion. As described by Alan Gragg, revelation was for Mayhew “the impersonal impartation of truths to be assented to by the mind. There was no suggestion of revelation as ‘encounter’ in which personally present God approaches human beings and lays His claims upon them.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, even though Mayhew consented about revelations existence, he limited it to what could be initiated and understood by one’s own reason. Rationalistic modern Christian thought has opted for an epistemology which has, according to Howard Ervin, either “. . . abdicated faith for reason, or conversely sought to validate faith epistemologically by a category of special pleading in the interests of propositional theology.”<sup>12</sup> Modern foundationalist epistemology cannot tolerate truth that cannot be established empirically. Therefore, the idea of faith, which is often unreasonable, exists only as it serves the believer rather than God. In this respect, the object of faith becomes a person’s ability to understanding and is therefore, powerlessly suspended in the mind of modernity.

<sup>10</sup> Albert T. Mollegen, *Christianity and the Crisis of Secularism* (Washington, D.C.: Henderson Services, 1951), 8, quoted in Owen C. Thomas, “The Origins of Modernity: An Alternative Interpretation of Western Cultural History,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 91, no. 2 Spr (2009): 249.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Gragg, “The Supernatural Rationalism of Jonathan Mayhew,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 13, no. 2 (Sum 1986): 123.

<sup>12</sup> Howard Ervin, “Hermeneutics: A Pentecostal Option,” *Pneuma*, 3:2 (Fall 1981): 24 quoted in Mark D. McLean, “Toward a Pentecostal Hermeneutic,” *Pneuma*, 6, no. 2 (Fall 1984): 36.

## Cessationism

Cessationism is a pneumatological perspective limiting the activity of the Holy Spirit. The theology of cessation denies the possibility of miracles and divine revelation for the church today. The cessationists' predominant position is that the charismatic gifts ceased at conclusion of the apostolic age and with the canonization of Scripture. Cessationists often base their arguments from 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 from which they claim a time of perfection will come (and in fact has come) when prophecy, tongues and knowledge will end. Proponents of this theory suggest the "perfect" is the Bible in its present form. Due to the arrival of the "perfect," the gifts of the Spirit are no longer needed. Interestingly, nothing in the Scripture supports these conclusions. Tom Jones insists, "One must begin with this premise in mind in order to arrive at that conclusion."<sup>13</sup> In other words, if this theological perspective does not originate from accurate scriptural evidence, from where did the preconceived assumptions come?

Cessationism has deeper origins in historical reactivism than biblical backing. The movement has its roots in a reaction to misused miracles by the Roman church to authenticate its doctrine. Jon Ruthven believes the Reformation leaders responded to these supernatural authentication tactics by simply denying the supernatural altogether. This concept addresses the claim of the miraculous was to establish doctrine. If this were true, the necessity of such a claim had ceased due to the closed canon of Scripture. Ruthven argues, "No more New Testament additions (from the pope or from church traditions); therefore, no miracles to accredit them, and vice versa."<sup>14</sup> Cessationism was

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<sup>13</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters: Analysis of Encounters That Shape Lives" (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, 2013), 51.

<sup>14</sup> Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology* (Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Press, 2013), 11.

an initial indictment against the Roman church gaining momentum in the rationalism of enlightenment.

Cessationism also has its roots in a paradoxical attempt to protect the canonized Word of God. Ruthven expresses, “In their zeal to ‘protect’ the canon of Scripture from additions,” cessationists “have no compunction whatsoever, in deleting parts of the canon, denying their rightful authority over the church in all times and places.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, to deny the present working of the Holy Spirit is to ignore that “49 percent of the verses of the New Testament contain elements of the supernatural such as healings, exorcisms, revelatory dreams, prophecy and references to angels, spirits, etc.”<sup>16</sup> Cessationists unwittingly become rationalists who are inevitably forced to disregard large sections of the Scripture to which they hold so dearly. The Bible consistently urges believers toward faith and powerful prayer. Miracles of healing, exorcism and raising the dead represent the normal Christian experience in the New Testament. The Bible consistently exhorts believers to desire, seek and employ the charismata. This position appears to misunderstand the intent of these gifts are to strengthen, encourage and comfort rather than substantiate doctrinal authority or accuracy. An evidentialist approach to the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit is to misunderstand its continuing intent in and for the present body of Christ. Cessationism’s legalistic hermeneutics are bound to fail eventually because of the inconsistencies of a pattern theology and the lack of emphasis toward the mysterious and/or miraculous. It is contextually inconsistent with the entirety

<sup>15</sup> Jon Ruthven, “On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic of Benjamin B. Warfield,” *Pneuma*, 12, no. 1 (Spr. 1990): 209.

<sup>16</sup> Henry I. Lederle, *Theology with Spirit: The Future of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2010), 24, cited by Tom Jones, “Divine Encounters: Analysis of Encounter that Shape Lives” (DMIN diss., United Theological Seminary, 2013), 44.

of the New Testament to discount or displace the present indwelling, illuminating and empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer today.

Cessationism is largely an epistemological position motivated by fear. This perspective proposes if it is possible for the Holy Spirit to communicate and act in power and revelation, then the “perfect” Scripture has potential to be displaced or distorted by new revelation. Like rationalists, cessationists have created a theology of salvation entirely dependent upon a correct epistemology. If there is potential for continuing revelation that disrupts what the cessationists currently understands as truth, it also jeopardizes the epistemological foundation upon which they have built their entire eternal security. When righteousness is dependent upon right understanding, an epistemology seeking truth rather than defending it becomes dangerous and potential devastating.

### **Existentialism**

At its philosophical foundation, existentialism is “... a protest against the status quo and the established order.”<sup>17</sup> Existential thought can be traced back to Augustinian theology, however, modern existentialism has its roots in theological perspectives most closely related to Danish Protestant Soren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard certainly had in mind awakening the masses toward a deeper more authentic Christ-likeness that deeply impacted other existentialist’s writings of Barth, Brunner, Tillich and Bultmann. Rudolph Bultmann’s predominate existential epistemological platform argues, “Belief in God does not arise from rational inquiry but from God’s making Himself known in momentary

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<sup>17</sup> Gerald F. Kreyche, “The Impact of Existentialism on Christian Thought,” *Religious Education*, 60 N-D (1965): 424.

personal encounter with one who has come to despair over his own finitude.”<sup>18</sup> Bultmann contends, “Natural inquiry of God yields no knowledge of Him but only of the human predicament.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, knowing God is not established through proposition or theory, but rather the experience of and participation with the Holy Spirit in a real revelatory event. Bultmann believes God is not known through rational inquiry, but rather through personal encounter. Bultmann articulates this point saying, “God is truly known not in propositions or general truths but only in concrete historical encounter.”<sup>20</sup>

According to Maximos Aghiorgoussis, the existentialist perspective of revelation is, in itself, “communion with God, participation in divine life, and the experience of the presence of God among men (Emmanuel).”<sup>21</sup> This idea carries the conviction that revelation is not found in the idea of something, but in the personhood of Someone. It is encountering the Holy Spirit that brings a person into participation in and with the life of God that reveals His nature and essence around them, in them and through them. Aghiorgoussis believes, “The communication of this life – through this personal encounter with the Spirit of God is called ‘theosis’ in the language of the East. The Spirit makes us partakers in the life (nature) of God.”<sup>22</sup> Theosis therefore, implies oneness with God born of ongoing encounter with the Holy Spirit that spills over into newness of life.

<sup>18</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 208.

<sup>19</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, 208.

<sup>20</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, 208.

<sup>21</sup> Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 23, no. 1 (Spr. 1978): 33.

<sup>22</sup> Maximos Aghiorgoussis, “Christian Existentialism of the Greek Fathers: Persons, Essence, and Energies in God,” 36.

Existentialism sees personal communion with God at the heart of authentic Christian existence.

The issue most critics have with existentialism is its lack of proof or validating evidence to support claims of divine revelation and encounter. Langdon Gilkey articulates her theology saying, “The symbolic thematization of existential experiences. Theological assertions are verified and validated only in the life of the religious community. Proof is not possible here but only confession and conviction based on the acknowledgement of a particular experience.”<sup>23</sup> This perspective advocate’s evidence of encounter is authenticated by its manifestation within the body of Christ. In this sense, the meaningful expression of existential epistemology is found in its corporate shaping power and the fruit it produces in community.

Perhaps the most valid argument against existentialism is not in the proof of experience, but rather the inherit value placed on it. Owen C. Thomas argues, “religions produce or shape experience rather than being the expressions of experience . . . thus there can be no experiential core.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, experiences do not shape religious thought, but rather existing religious thought becomes a filter through which experience is understood and upon which it is reflected. Existentialist, Paul Tillich, contends experience is a theological medium but cannot be understood as its source.<sup>25</sup> Edward Farley argues similarly concerning theological evidence saying, “. . . experience mediates

<sup>23</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 455 quoted in Owen C. Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 78, nos. 1-2 (1985): 187.

<sup>24</sup> Owen C. Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 78, nos. 1-2 (1985): 193.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63), 42.

but does not constitute that evidence.”<sup>26</sup> Farley demands, “If theology is able to make true judgments at all, it must have some field of evidence to which it refers. That is, it must have some manifested activity, behavior, and structure disclosing itself through experience.”<sup>27</sup>

Thomas proposes a person’s theology “may contradict previous experience, transform present experience, or produce a new and unforeseen experience.”<sup>28</sup> When a person’s theology is completely experience based, it limits one’s understanding of God to current experiences of Him. This can deprive the believer of living in expectation beyond experience and in a reality of relationship which is to come, but has not yet been realized. Thomas concludes his thoughts on an epistemology based on Christian experience saying, “It creates the paradoxical situation of realizing both the fundamentally determinative character of experience in regard to theology and also the practical unavailability of this experience for the purposes of assessment and argument in theology.”<sup>29</sup> The difficulty with a purely existential epistemology is it can emphasize experience to the exclusion of reason rather than understanding the mutual value of both.

## Phenomenology

Experiential epistemology is defined in the word phenomenology. Phenomenology is a term describing both one’s experience of God and the perception

<sup>26</sup> Edward Farley, *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress), 1982, 175-176, quoted in Owen C. Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 78, nos. 1-2 (1985): 196.

<sup>27</sup> Farley, 176, in quoted Owen C. Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 78, nos. 1-2 (1985): 196.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” 197.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, “Theology and Experience,” 201.

and process associated with the understanding of that experience. Clifford B. Anderson describes the purpose of phenomenology as more than exploring the infinite field of transcendental experience, but rather “to delineate the essential structures governing transcendental experience.”<sup>30</sup> Anderson adds, “The goal of the phenomenologist is to reach beyond his actual experience to the necessary and universal structure of such experience in general.”<sup>31</sup> Phenomenology, therefore, is as much about developing processes for exploring experience as it is the experience itself.

Edmund Husserl’s attempts to determine the nature of experience found it almost impossible for an individual to experience a moment without being influenced by what had taken place in the past or what was expected to take place in the future. Husserl’s found the ‘now-point’ was always influenced by what was and anticipation of what would be. The phenomenological investigation, Anderson argues, like Husserl, “. . . rules out the possibility that any single moment of our experience can stand in absolute discontinuity from the immediate past and the immanent future. Experience of the present blends imperceptibly into the past and future.”<sup>32</sup> Skip Horton Parker believes Jean-Luc Marion argues against Husserl’s phenomenological reduction saying, “It allows no room for the appearance of God.”<sup>33</sup> This would imply that Husserl’s understanding limits the interpretation of any experience to the person experiencing it rather than the possibility

<sup>30</sup> Clifford B. Anderson, “The Phenomenology of Revelation: Husserl and Barth on the Consciousness of the Present Moment,” *Zeitschrift für Dialektisch Theologie*, 4 (2010): 144.

<sup>31</sup> Clifford B. Anderson, “The Phenomenology of Revelation: Husserl and Barth on the Consciousness of the Present Moment,” 144.

<sup>32</sup> Clifford B. Anderson, “The Phenomenology of Revelation: Husserl and Barth on the Consciousness of the Present Moment,” 149.

<sup>33</sup> Skip Horton Parker, “Tracking the Theological ‘Turn’: The Pneumatological Imagination and the Renewal of Metaphysics and Theology in the 21st Century,” *PentecoStudies*, 6, no. 1 (2007): 54.

that the revelatory Spirit of God could, in fact, author an encounter which stands alone in the moment. Marion offers a “radical phenomenology” based upon divine donation, which makes possible a phenomenological reduction that is open to transcendence.<sup>34</sup> D. Lyle Dabney articulates pneumatic epistemology arguing, “The Spirit of God is not human spirit aspiring to the divine, but neither is it the subjectivity of God making an object of the human. Indeed, rather than subjective or objective, the Spirit is better conceived as transjective; that is to say, that by which we as individuals are transcended, engaged, oriented beyond ourselves and related to God.”<sup>35</sup> Transjective experience highlights the potential of a revelatory experience providing a knowing beyond the reasonable limitations of the person involved in the encounter. This does not imply a phenomenological epistemology is necessarily void of reason.

Phenomenology argues a meaningful epistemological process is based on experience. This profound sense of experience is a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology “presupposes that what is most real about something is not its abstract, objective character, but the very concrete prehension we have of it within our subjective becoming.”<sup>36</sup> An essential aspect of phenomenological experience is the concept of revelation. John Baille defines revelation as “an unveiling, the lifting of an obscuring veil,

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<sup>34</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Metaphysics and Phenomenology: A Summary for Theologians*, In: Graham Ward (ed.), *The Postmodern God*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 284.

<sup>35</sup> D. Lyle Dabney, ‘Otherwise Engaged in the Spirit: A First Theology for a Twenty-First Century.’ In: Miraslaw Wolf, Carmen Krieg, and Thomas Kucharz (eds.), *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jurgen Moltmann* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 161.

<sup>36</sup> Jennifer G Jesse, “A Process Perspective of Revelation: A Nonfoundational Epistemology,” *Encounter*, 48, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 373.

so as to disclose something that was formerly hidden.”<sup>37</sup> When connecting phenomenology and revelation, experience clearly positions people to receive revelatory encounters from God, illuminating that which was formerly veiled. In process theology, this ideology of revelation is understood through the perception of prevenience. Prevenience alone, however, does not constitute revelation. A truly phenomenological epistemology recognizes revelation is established when prevenience is met and responded to by reason.

Ronald F. Thiemann, author of *Revelation and Theology*, insists revelation is, at its core, an issue of identifiability. Thiemann contends the issue is more ontological than epistemological in nature arguing, “No epistemology allows for both God’s prevenience and God’s relation to human conceptuality because it always results in a foundationalism which keeps the two either separate or indistinguishable.”<sup>38</sup> Thiemann is a proponent of process theology suggesting a necessary interrelationship between revelation and reason as both jointly and individually represented in human experience. In process theology, reason and revelation are not at odds, but rather work together in unison in the Christian epistemological process. In this regard, knowledge of God or a proper theological epistemology presupposes an ontological discussion. Epistemology then, in the phenomenological sense, is the vehicle by which ontological discovery is made.

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<sup>37</sup> John Bailie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press), 1956, 19, quoted in Jennifer G Jesse, “A Process Perspective of Revelation: A Nonfoundational Epistemology,” *Encounter*, 48, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 378.

<sup>38</sup> Jennifer G Jesse, “A Process Perspective of Revelation: A Nonfoundational Epistemology,” 370.

### Pneumatology and Perceptible Inspiration

Empiricists, rationalists, and modernists demand knowledge be secured in a structured epistemology making it beyond reproach. Little room can be found for mystery or methods lacking the evidential proof they claim to value. Joseph Cunningham believes this was the predominate criticism of John Wesley's pneumatology of perceptible inspiration. Cunningham expresses this idea saying, "Humans could experience, by faith, the witness of the Holy Spirit, and subsequently germinate the fruits of holy living."<sup>39</sup> Through this personal experience of the Holy Spirit, God's communicative nature was authenticated and subsequently lives were changed. Wesley believed a person experienced inspiration both directly and indirectly.

Wesley contended every believer encountered the Spirit of God directly through revelatory inspiration. Wesley claimed, "The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God."<sup>40</sup> Wesley argued this experience of direct witness of the Holy Spirit preceded an indirect witness of a person's own spirit manifesting a returned love to God and a desire to live fully surrendered to Him. It is a preventient epistemology in which what is known about God is more directly related to His initiating revelation of Himself than of the believers seeking to know Him. In this way, God's preventience recruits each individual, through His Spirit, transcending

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Cunningham, "A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: "Perceptible Inspiration" Reconsidered," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 243.

<sup>40</sup> John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Work of John Wesley*, "The Witness of the Spirit – Discourse 1," Frank Baker, general ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 1:274, quoted in Joseph Cunningham, "A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: "Perceptible Inspiration" Reconsidered," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 244.

propositional knowledge and being understood first with the heart and then responding with the head.

J.I. Packer advocates, “Knowing God is a relationship calculated to thrill a person’s heart.”<sup>41</sup> Wesley describes this inward experience in His famous quote saying, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”<sup>42</sup> Wesley’s illuminating experience convinced him of the value and importance of an encounter with the Holy Spirit going beyond reason and straight to the heart. Paul King addresses the subject of divine illumination arguing, “Revelation knowledge transcends sense knowledge, as knowledge that is received from the Bible and/or illumination of the Holy Spirit by faith.”<sup>43</sup> King reminds the reader of Jesus’ ministry not being restricted to sense, reason, or logic, but rather the result of the Holy Spirit’s leading. Malcolm Muggeridge declares that personal encounter with the Holy Spirit results in “a form of knowledge which transcends the intellect.”<sup>44</sup> This is the kind of experiential knowing described by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians when he encourages them to know the love of God that transcends knowledge.

Experiential knowledge can take a person places in their heart that their heads are not able to ascend. J. I. Packer asserts, “You can have all the right notions in your head

<sup>41</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 36.

<sup>42</sup> John Wesley, "Journals & Diaries II (1738-1743)," 18:250, quoted in Joseph Cunningham, "A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: "Perceptible Inspiration" Reconsidered," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 245.

<sup>43</sup> King, *Only Believe*, 213.

<sup>44</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, quoted in A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God: A 31-Day Experience*, compiled by Edythe Draper (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1995), 79, quoted by King, *Only Believe*, 219.

without ever tasting in your heart the realities to which they refer; and a simple Bible reader and sermon hearer who is full of the Holy Spirit will develop a far deeper acquaintance with his God and Savior than a more learned scholar who is content with being theologically correct.”<sup>45</sup> Andrew Murray describes the necessary posture of the believer to receive this divine revelation. Murray declares, “It is not the power of intellect, it is not even the earnest desire to know the truth that fits a man for the Spirit’s teaching; it is a life yielded to Him in waiting dependence and full obedience to be made spiritual, that receives the spiritual wisdom and understanding.”<sup>46</sup>

The process of continuing transformation becomes rather cyclical in nature. The direct witness of the Holy Spirit along with the witness of one’s own spirit form a reciprocating dance of receiving and giving back that together becomes the foundation of Wesley’s theology of perceptible inspiration. Wesley described this continuing action as “God’s breathing into the soul, and the soul’s breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the re-action of the soul upon God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith.”<sup>47</sup> Again, this strikes at the heart of a pneumatological epistemology advocating the initiating work of God in His Holy Spirit to enlighten and transform the recipient of His outrageous goodness.

Donald Bloesch describes the Holy Spirit as “not only the means by which we receive revelation but also the source and agent of revelation. He is not merely an adjunct

<sup>45</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Murray, *Day by Day with Andrew Murray*, compiled by M. J. Shepperson (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1961), 38-39, quoted by Harris, 108.

<sup>47</sup> John Wesley, “The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God,” 1:44 quoted by Joseph Cunningham, “A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: “Perceptible Inspiration” Reconsidered,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 255.

to the Word but the speaker of the Word.”<sup>48</sup> Bloesch is speaking of the *Rhema* Word, which Wesley refers to as the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. This Word along with God’s written *Logos* Word creates the full expression of His life-changing voice for the believer. Conservative detractors argue concrete evidence was missing in Wesley’s pneumatological expression of perceptible inspiration and an experiential approach to theology would eventually and inevitably move one away from objective Scripture and to subjective enthusiasm. Though distinctly different, Cartesian, Empiricist or Kantian approaches all assumed epistemologies based on context-free unquestioned beliefs with conclusions obvious to any rational person. This foundationalism sought to discredit anything with the appearance of sensationalism. It demanded belief be built on a foundation of rational certainty to maintain any integrity. Empirical data was therefore the proof required for foundationalist epistemology.

Wesley believed the validation of such an experience would be confirmed by Scripture and observed in the resulting fruit. Wesley describes this interweaving as drawn partly “from the Word of God, and partly from our own experience. The world says everyone who has fruit of the Spirit is a child of God.”<sup>49</sup> In fact, the testimony of the fruit of the Spirit, revealed in and given by direct witness, initiates and authenticates transformation in the believer’s life. The validation of the experience is in the measurement of its resulting fruit. Theodore Runyon expresses: “Every Christian has the right to expect to sense the presence of God to his soul. This being touched by the Spirit

<sup>48</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 277, quoted in Harris, 83.

<sup>49</sup> John Wesley, “The Witness of the Spirit—Discourse II,” 1:287-288, quoted in Joseph Cunningham, “A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: “Perceptible Inspiration” Reconsidered,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 254.

of God, this participation, this *koinonia*, is precisely what has the power to transform, to bring new life, to renew the image of God.”<sup>50</sup> Gregory the Great describes the transformation occurring through personal Holy Spirit encounter in moving terms saying, “The Spirit’s very touch is teaching. It changes a human mind in a moment to enlighten it; suddenly what it was it no longer is, suddenly it is what it was not.”<sup>51</sup>

Contemporary to Wesley was Jonathan Mayhew who denounced Wesleyans as “enthusiasts” describing them as “enlightened idiots for making the Spirit of truth and wisdom the vehicle of nonsense and contradictions by calling what is reasonable carnal and by palming off the grossest absurdities as divinely revealed truth.”<sup>52</sup> Wesley did not argue that experience dismissed the intellect, but rather that the joining of the two validated the Spirit’s work in releasing the believer to live with fruit and power. Paul King argues in regard to the heart and mind saying, “It is not either/or but “both/and; use your mind and sense to its fullest, but recognize that knowledge by faith or revelation is higher and may sometimes seem to contravene reason.”<sup>53</sup> It becomes clear then, what God first initiates in the heart He authenticates in the mind.

<sup>50</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 157, quoted in Joseph Cunningham, “A New Trajectory in Wesleyan Pneumatology: “Perceptible Inspiration” Reconsidered,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 45, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 261.

<sup>51</sup> Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Inc., 1997), as quoted by Harris, 36.

<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, *Seven Sermons* (Boston, MA: Rogers and Fowler, 1749), 150.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Only Believe*, 222.

## Conclusion

A proper pneumatological epistemology places a premium on God's pursuing prevenience. It understands the Spirit of God is the initiator of human experiences. Still, a proper epistemology does not discredit either experience or intellect but places them in the appropriate position. When reason and reasonableness take the lead rather than relationship, it often results in the exclusion of authentic participation in the life of God. Gnosticism, rationalism and cessationism each, in their own ways, become detached theological theories. Each of those epistemological positions fails to live in the reality that the Kingdom of God is not words, but power. When a person relies on their own intellect, they rob themselves of the opportunity to be engaged by the empowering and transforming Spirit of God. They place reason on the throne and become worshippers of knowledge rather than knowing. In the same way, when existentialists and phenomenologists value experience while forfeiting reason, they too become one-sided worshippers. Experience alone can limit the believer's theological expectations to the current point of their experience. Exclusive experiential prejudice can give the believer false expectations as well. As Karl Barth explains, "The Christian message is not an 'ism' which can enter into conflict with other 'isms' . . . Christianity simply means to bear witness to all mankind, with their different 'isms,' what God's will, His work, and revelation."<sup>54</sup>

The power of a pneumatological epistemology of perceptible inspiration is in its appreciation of the invitation and initiation of the Holy Spirit's direct witness, but also an

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<sup>54</sup> Karl Barth, "The New Humanism and the Humanism of God," *Theology Today*, 8, no. 2 (Jl 1951): 158.

understanding the necessity of our response completes the exchange that is made. That exchange, in epistemological terms, becomes giving up a hollow human philosophical wisdom and receiving Jesus Christ, “who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30, NASB). A person therefore, comes to Christ as the result of a personal experience of the power of the Holy Spirit. The illuminating and empowering Holy Spirit enables a person to be Christian. The Spirit produces freedom, peace, power and life. The active and inspiring Holy Spirit forms the foundation of a theological epistemology. Knowing, therefore, is firstly the result of being known.

If then, a personal encounter with the Spirit of God is the key to participating in the life of God and experiencing the kind of transformation bearing fruit in every season, it is vital for people to be positioned to receive this kind of encounter. The question therefore becomes, can a person be positioned for greater epistemological revelation through an encounter with the Spirit of God? Though beyond the scope of this particular writing, this epistemological encounter through experience will be explored in the context of intentional relational and risk oriented discipleship.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who know great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.<sup>1</sup>

Transformation is at the core of Christian faith and the centerpiece of discipleship.

Following Jesus is not simply the equivalent of a get into heaven free card, but must be about becoming like Him while here on earth. Discipleship is the process of transformation into the likeness of Jesus with ever increasing glory, in which we get to do the same things Jesus did. A foundational problem this project addresses, in western Christianity, is the idea that information equals transformation. The popular book, *The Dirt on Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church*, contends, “40 percent of a spoken message is lost from a listener’s memory after just two minutes. After a half day, 60 percent of the message is gone. And after a week, over 90 percent of the message has leaked out of the memory forever.”<sup>2</sup> Still, the sermon is the centerpiece of North American Christian experience. If information is limited in its transformative

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<sup>1</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly: How Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2012), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Thom and Joani Schultz, *The Dirt On Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 1999), 70.

potential, what moves people from passive pew packers into powerful participants in the Kingdom of God?

This project's pressing purpose is centered on creating contexts which facilitate an experience of God, and does so based on two presupposed ideas: transformation comes through both experience and encounter. The purpose of this chapter is to review research providing insights into the power and process of transformation through experiential learning, supernatural encounter with God, Christian Adventure, and current innovative models of discipleship. These resources will provide insights from the fields of education, philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, and practitioners of Christian adventure.

### **Ingredients for Transformation**

#### *Meaningful Learning*

Stacy Taniguchi's dissertation at Brigham Young University, entitled "Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning: Find the Attributes of Meaningful Learning Experiences in an Outdoor Education Program," sought to determine what attributes, from an educational perspective, contribute to a meaningful learning experience. Taniguchi argues a meaningful experience is one defined by the participant and is concerned with personal development or growth.<sup>3</sup> In other words, a meaningful experience is a transformative one. Taniguchi's research presents seven principles promoting experiential learning a transformational process. These principles include: a

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<sup>3</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning: Finding The Attributes Of Meaningful Learning Experiences In An Outdoor Education* (Doctor of Philosophy diss., Brigham Young University, 2004), 12.

mixture of content and process, an absence of excessive teacher judgment, an encouragement of big picture perspectives, opportunity for reflection, creating an emotional investment, learning outside of one's perceived comfort zone, and the presence of meaningful relationships.<sup>4</sup> The combination of these components create contexts designed to equip participants to be changed by their experiences. Each of these elements contribute toward an inward posture of the student giving greater opportunity for transformation.

Taniguchi believes the essence of outdoor education is a quest for adventure and discovery.<sup>5</sup> She goes on to site communication, perception, arousal, and motivation as the psychological foundations of adventure and discovery.<sup>6</sup> These features provide an effective framework for adventure curriculums. Taniguchi presents the research of Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards who did a meta-analysis of adventure programs to assess their effectiveness. Their conclusions concerning adventure programs detailed the resulting outcomes saying, "These programs have a major impact on the lives of participants, especially in the outcome of self-control as it is related to regulation of self, responsibility, or an assurance of self."<sup>7</sup> The study highlighted the various effects on each participant resulting from their participation and the dramatic impact adventure programming had on their lives.

Through Taniguchi's research, she identified five major themes of meaningful learning experiences: risk, awkwardness, fractional sublimation, reconstruction, and

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<sup>4</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 42-43.

<sup>5</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 46.

<sup>6</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 46.

<sup>7</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 50.

growth.<sup>8</sup> Risk, a key ingredient in outdoor adventure programs, proved to be an essential element producing both anxiety and awkwardness in participants, posturing them for transformative experiences. Taniguchi observed that risk, understood as anything from life-threatening situations, embarrassment, uncertainty, discomfort, or sacrifice, had a profound impact on the potential of how meaningful the experience was for the participant. In fact, just the perception of risk appears to be a doorway into the process of meaningful learning experiences.<sup>9</sup> Risk moves participants into a state of discomfort Taniguchi refers to as awkwardness. Taniguchi's research demands any definition of risk must result in a state of awkwardness. Awkwardness is the disruption of ones preconceived and often misperceived understandings of personal identity.

This creates the necessary challenge to a person's façade (the false ideas or misrepresentations of who they are). Taniguchi's research argues that without the disruption of awkwardness, the process leading to a meaningful learning experience is disrupted.<sup>10</sup> It is the participant's recognition of vulnerability in the state of awkwardness that moves them into fractional sublimation—the shedding of facades. Though this evaluative process of personal identity may be uncomfortable or even emotionally/spiritually painful, it becomes necessary part of the meaningful experience produced by outdoor adventure. Again, as with risk and awkwardness, fractional sublimation was discovered to be an essential ingredient for all those participants that

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<sup>8</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 82-86.

<sup>10</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 91.

expressed having a meaningful experience.<sup>11</sup> The decisive theme following fractional sublimation was reconstruction. This phenomenon was characterized by “participant’s recognition and acceptance of what was discovered in the fractional sublimation stage and by the participant’s attempt to make changes based on this self-realization awareness.”<sup>12</sup> The expression of meaningful learning experience became manifested when this occurred because participants gained greater appreciation for and insight into their personal identities. This realization led participants into the final stage consistently expressed in the process of meaningful experience—growth. Taniguchi defines growth as “the recognition that a personal change has occurred and that the process yielded results that can be memorable and worthwhile.”<sup>13</sup> Growth, therefore, was the final verifying expression signifying transformation had occurred and displaying through the adventure, meaningful learning had taken place.

Other key ingredients for a meaningful learning experience gleaned from the research include recognition, acceptance, vulnerability, and emotive response. Each of these components collaborates toward a meaningful and memorable experience. In fact, the ability to identify and recall clear details about the experience, such as thoughts, emotions and relationships, enable the meaningful experience to become continually transformative. One of the surprising conclusions of Taniguchi’s research was the importance of sequence within the process. Each of the participants reporting a meaningful learning experience in the outdoor adventure reported identical sequencing of the five elements discussed above. The participants did not have identical experiences,

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<sup>11</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 99.

<sup>12</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 99.

<sup>13</sup> Stacy T. Taniguchi, *Outdoor Education and Meaningful Learning*, 103.

but each began by facing or perceiving risk, moving into awkwardness, then to fractional sublimation followed by reconstruction and finally growth. The common conclusion shared by each participant was the important role outdoor adventure had in facilitating a process producing a meaningful learning experience resulting in a life dramatically changed.

### *Emotion*

Thom and Joani Shultz write from an educational perspective and suggest a meaningful learning experience combines retention and action. They suggest the use of metaphors, themes, narratives, interval reinforcement, and the practice of music in teaching. These various learning styles are attempts to connect learning with the heart, not simply the intellect. In fact, powerful learning always connects with the learner's emotion. The profound intensity of one's emotion anchors an experience in their minds, hearts and souls. This mirrors an often counter intuitive Kingdom principle. In the Kingdom, belief does not follow understanding, but rather understanding follows belief. This, like learning, suggests the heart is able to take a learner places the mind is unable or unwilling to go.

The Shultz' share compelling scientific evidence suggesting, "there are more neural connections going from the emotional part of the brain to the intellectual part than vice versa. That's why our emotions are often more powerful than logic in influencing our behavior."<sup>14</sup> If learning is to produce transformation, emotion becomes the glue connecting theory to practice. University of Oregon professor Robert Sylwester contends,

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<sup>14</sup> Thom and Joani Schultz, *The Dirt On Learning: Groundbreaking Tools to Grow Faith in Your Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc., 1999), 91.

“Emotion is very important to the educative process because it drives attention, which drives learning and memory . . . It’s impossible to separate emotion from the important activities of life. Don’t even try.”<sup>15</sup> Learning should engage the emotions of love, fear, surprise, wonder, anger and hilarity. The more ideas are connected to emotion the more transformative they become. To make learning a sterile, emotionless endeavor is to rob learners of immediate and life changing application.

### *Vulnerability*

Brene Brown makes a compelling case from a psychological perspective for the transformative role of vulnerability in her book *Daring Greatly: How Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. Brown begins her book by celebrating vulnerability. Brown defines vulnerability as “not knowing victory or defeat, it’s understanding the necessity of both; it’s engaging. It’s being all in.”<sup>16</sup> Ones willingness to risk, to engage, and to be seen encompasses life changing vulnerability. Brown believes this transformation results in “wholehearted” living. Living wholeheartedly is understanding, as Brown puts it, “Yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn’t change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.”<sup>17</sup> In this respect, vulnerability is a compelling catalyst for living courageous, compassionate and connected lives. Brown believes vulnerability is “the core,

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<sup>15</sup> Thom and Joani Schultz, *The Dirt On Learning*, 93.

<sup>16</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 10.

the heart, the center of meaningful human experiences.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, when people are unwilling to be vulnerable, they are unwilling to participate in the positioning of themselves for radical transformation.

Through the course of her research, Brown discovered common characteristics inhibiting vulnerability. These qualities include: shame, comparison, and disengagement.<sup>19</sup> These qualities are enemies of vulnerability and therefore stifle transformation otherwise resulting in wholehearted living. Brown contends this vulnerability is the “core of all emotions” and “the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity and the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity.”<sup>20</sup> In essence, vulnerability becomes the emotional pathway positioning each individual for transformative experience. The pursuit of this posture of the heart exposed in a person’s emotional availability becomes the creative contextual goal of experiential/adventure learning.

### **Encounters for Transformation**

#### *Encounters*

Tom Jones’ Doctor of Ministry project, *Divine Encounters: Analysis of Encounters That Shape Lives*, sought to prove, “believers who have a supernatural or divine encounter experienced increased effectiveness, fruitfulness, commitment,

<sup>18</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 33-34.

fulfillment and clarity of ministry focus than they evidenced before the experience.<sup>21</sup> In short, Jones' dissertation was a study of the transformative effects of experiencing God in supernatural encounter. Jones' qualitative phenomenological study addressed the issue many Christians do not understand or believe that humankind has the potential to encounter God in these life changing ways. The research was done to display the consistent experience of these kinds of encounters and the radical results they yield in the lives of the believers experiencing them.

Participants in Jones' survey reported incredibly transformative effects following their encounters with God. Jones observed, "ninety-four percent stated that their experience had a great effect on their ministry with 6% claiming a moderate effect."<sup>22</sup> Participants also reported dramatic shifts in the areas of family relationships and ministry relationships. The data collected in these studies also displayed dramatic change in the lives of individuals having encounters. An amazing "69% entered ministry, 62% changed denominations, 49% changed professions and 44% moved to a new location."<sup>23</sup> These numbers represent significant changes occurring in people's lives directly related to their experience of God. Still, changes were not only marked by occupation and location but a profound transition in the way they experienced God after their encounter. Jones' research revealed "a 79% increase in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, a 76% increase in the area of healing and a 64% increase in the area of evangelism."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters: Analysis of Encounters That Shape Lives" (DMin diss., United Theological Seminary, 2013), V.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 162.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 163.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 163.

Participants also reported overwhelming increases in endurance, desire to serve God, passion for ministry, joy, and peace.<sup>25</sup> These results abundantly confirmed the awe-inspiring transformative effects of encountering God.

Jones' research also discovered the context for many of these encounters as well as the physical manifestations resulting from them. Almost half of the participants reported having their encounters during a time of impartation, while a third claimed their experience was a visitation from the Lord. Other experiences included angelic visitations, deliverance, prophetic declaration and dreams.<sup>26</sup> Physical manifestations accompanying these encounters included shaking, heat, electricity, crying, tongues, types of paralysis, visions and deliverance.<sup>27</sup> A predominate physical experience was not shared among participants but each encounter was unique to the individual.

One of the more interesting findings from Jones' research dealt with the spiritual condition of the person having the encounter. The data revealed sixty-two percent of the respondents confessed to being at some point of crisis before their divine encounter.<sup>28</sup> Although broadly defined in the data, discovering well over half described themselves as being in crisis is a significant number. The indications of the study create an obvious marker that encountering God is related to some type of physical, emotional or spiritual calamity. Clearly crisis creates vulnerability and therefore availability to God, who desperately wants to encounter each person. Interestingly, Jones reports when respondents were restricted to choosing only the best way to describe their lives before

<sup>25</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 163.

<sup>26</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 164.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 164.

<sup>28</sup> Tom Jones, "Divine Encounters," 162.

their encounter, only “30% said they were hurting, struggling or burned out, while 46% said they were ‘hungry for more.’”<sup>29</sup> This data indicates the effects of crisis position a person’s heart in various ways. While it is significant that a third of participants expressed they were struggling, it is more substantial that almost half determined the best description of the hearts to be hungry. Again, these results point to a willingness to be vulnerable and available to encountering God as a frequent prerequisite for these life-changing experiences. These results do not demand each person have similar encounters to those described in the research to be transformed, but points to the importance of experiencing God supernaturally and the consistent and compelling effects it has on person’s life.

### *Fruit*

Margaret M. Poloma performed a sociological study for *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* entitled “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’: A Sociological Perspective.” The purpose of Poloma’s study was to determine if the “Blessing” produced fruit, or transformation, in the lives of those who had attended conferences in 1995. The study, like those above, was predominately qualitative in nature. Initial questionnaires were distributed to 918 respondents from 20 different countries with the majority coming from the United States, Canada and England.<sup>30</sup> In 1997, a follow-up questionnaire was sent to 690 of the original respondents receiving 53% in

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<sup>29</sup> Tom Jones, “Divine Encounters,” 162.

<sup>30</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’: A Sociological Perspective,” *Pneuma*, 20, no. 1 (Spr. 1998): 44.

return.<sup>31</sup> One of the early and significant findings in the data collection dealt directly with the transformation of the participant. Poloma reported the data supported “a lasting dispositional change brought about by a new awareness of the immanence of Jesus’ presence that has persisted for over two years.”<sup>32</sup>

Central to Poloma’s defining of supernatural encounter were renewal manifestations including the manifestation itself and the emotional response to the manifestation. Though “The Blessing” is often referred to as “the laughing revival,” it was resting in the spirit and the bodily manifestations such as shaking, rolling, and jumping that were statistically tied for most common.<sup>33</sup> Weeping came in second, while speaking in tongues and laughing tied for third. Being drunk in the spirit and birthing came in together at fourth, and roaring was alone in last place.<sup>34</sup> While the survey confirmed the experience of physical manifestations, the findings suggested they were “not a constant,” but rather they “wax and wane in the lives of Spirit filled believers.”<sup>35</sup> In fact, of the list of common manifestations, the data appears to represent that participants were not experiencing them in access, but for many it appeared the expressions were for a season.

The emotional responses to these manifestations were as varied as the manifestations themselves. The most common emotion experienced was peace, which was reported by almost half of the total sample. Other responses included extremes of joy

<sup>31</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 45.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 48.

<sup>33</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 52.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 52.

<sup>35</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 49.

and sadness, guilt and forgiveness, depression and jubilation. Perhaps the most incredible testimony of the power of emotion was not what was experienced during the manifestation but rather, after. Poloma reports “the overwhelming choices were love of God (89%), peace (89%), love (85%), joy (83%), gratitude (82%), happy (81%), and satisfaction (79%).”<sup>36</sup> These expressions of positive emotions clearly articulate the result of the encounter/manifestation is as important as, or more important than, the manifestation itself.

Poloma’s research initially investigated fruit in four categories: personal spiritual refreshment, holiness and healing, evangelism and outreach, and social relations.<sup>37</sup> In light of existing sociological models, Poloma added and emphasized the categories of healing and empowerment. In the report, sociologist Meredith McGuire, who has done research on Spirit-filled Christians notes, “The key criterion of healing is the process of becoming closer to the Lord.”<sup>38</sup> Again, this emphasized the transformation is induced not by a manifestation alone, but in experiencing, encountering and drawing closer to the Lord. It is irrevocably related to intimacy with God and is experienced in relationship with God, not in information about God. Poloma contends the data clearly declares, “spiritual healing is perceived to be one of the unmistakable fruits of the renewal.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, “over 90 percent of those who responded to the follow-up survey indicated that they had a closer relationship with God in 1997 than they did in 1995.”<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 54.

<sup>37</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 55.

<sup>38</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 55.

<sup>39</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 58.

<sup>40</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 60.

Other startling data collected from respondents in the study included numerous stories of marriages being saved with 88% reporting to love their spouses more after encountering the Lord.<sup>41</sup> Also surprising, none of those reporting physical healing in 1995 reported having lost the healing by 1997.<sup>42</sup> In fact, after experiencing God at “The Blessing,” respondents reported vast increases in receiving prophetic words, words of knowledge, prophetic intercession, prayers used to physically heal others, prayers used in emotionally healing others, being used in deliverance, and receiving prophet dreams.<sup>43</sup> These qualitative results create a compelling case for the immediate and lasting fruit of “The Blessing” and support the idea that people experience radical transformation as a result of encountering the Lord.

### *More*

In Randy Clark’s book, *There is More: The Secret to Experiencing God’s Power to Change Your Life*, he shares several testimonies of incredible encounters people have had with God and the resulting fruit it birthed in their lives. These stories are illuminating and inspiring accounts of the kinds of experiences most Christians believe are expressed in Scripture but are no longer available to believer today. The heart of Clark’s content centers on the theology of impartation as understood in biblical contexts and experienced in current contexts. These impartations are accompanied by dramatic increases in the miraculous aspects of the Holy Spirit’s power and gifting. Clark begins the book by laying a biblical foundation for impartation. Using Old and New Testament references, he

<sup>41</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 62.

<sup>42</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 64.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret M. Poloma, “Inspecting the Fruit of the ‘Toronto Blessing’,” 65.

fashions a persuasive and powerful argument for the laying on of hands and the impartation of anointing through the Holy Spirit from one believer to another.

While Clark is a formidable theologian, he is an equally stirring storyteller. The most impactful portions the book are expressed in the testimonies told. These accounts follow a meaningful pattern of explanation: this is who they were; this is their encounter with God; this is who they became. These narratives are filled with compelling characters and surreal circumstances all pointing to the greatness of God.

For example, in 1997, Rolland and Heidi Baker, long-term missionaries in Mozambique, Africa were dramatically touched by God. The encounter, which lasted for several days and nights and included moments of paralysis, heat, electricity, laughter and weeping, changed the Baker's lives forever. Since that time, "God has birthed a miraculous church-planting movement that now encompasses over ten thousand churches in ten nations, as well as over a million salvations."<sup>44</sup>

In 2003, Marcelo Casagrande encountered the Lord in Brazil. He neither desired nor expected this encounter and yet it had a transformative effect on his life and ministry. In this encounter, Marcelo experienced shaking, falling, having a visitation from God, then being driven home by a friend. Eight years later, in 2011, Marcelo had another encounter with the Lord and a mighty wave of healing in his ministry was ignited. In a single year, Marcelo preached in all the countries of South America, prayed for and saw "over eighty blind people recover their vision, over seventy deaf people receive their hearing, and over sixty lame walk."<sup>45</sup> Clark shares seven additional testimonies of

<sup>44</sup> Randy Clark, *There is More: The Secret to Experiencing God's Power to Change Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2013), 66.

<sup>45</sup> Randy Clark, *There is More*, 73.

fruitfulness resulting from normal people's supernatural experiences. The most powerful testimony was Clark's personal account of encountering the Lord and the life altering shift for himself and countless others who have encountered God through his ministry. These stories declare the radical nature of transformation that stemming from encounters with God.

Clark also produces meaningful and appropriate historical accounts of movements sparked by significant outpourings of the Holy Spirit in certain places and through certain people. Clark's use and insight into church history provides depth and credibility to his modern day testimonies. These historical descriptions also create an expectation for what God is willing and able to do in our day and in days to come. Clark moves toward the conclusion of his book by discussing a "new Pentecost" saying, "It took a full-blown, massive recovery effort orchestrated by the Holy Spirit, with the results so important to God that He caused both Protestants and Roman Catholics to begin praying for a "new Pentecost."<sup>46</sup> Clark then concludes the book with a call for restoration and an invitation for each believer to be aware of their anointing, the places the Lord is sending them, and a new receptivity toward a new touch from the Holy Spirit. This book is a compelling articulation of the presence, power, and promises of God for all people, in all places, and in all generations. The underlying and encompassing message of the book is, no matter who you are or what you have experienced of God, there is more.

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<sup>46</sup> Randy Clark, *There is More*, 192.

## Adventure for Transformation

### *Risk*

*God of Adventure: Exploring How God Teaches Through Adventure and Calls Us to Do the Same*, by Bruce Dunning, takes a closer look at the definition, questions, process, theories and theologies of adventure with a heart for inspiring and equipping Christian leaders to use adventure as a medium for radical inclusive change in others. In fact, a consistent plea for Christian leaders to incorporate Christian Adventure is found throughout the book. Dunning expresses concern saying, “Christianity’s primary method of teaching truth is through proclamation, which usually translates into a lecture style: someone stands in front of a group and proclaims truth.”<sup>47</sup> South African Christian camping program, Adventure N’ Beyond, expresses, “Students are seen as empty ‘containers’ that the teacher needs to fill with facts, ideologies and formulas.”<sup>48</sup> Assuming being filled with information results in transformation is not a new problem. This inadequate and antiquated notion of education is one of the primary problems being addressed by this project as well.

Peter Vail, author of *Learning As a Way of Being* demands, “We have to stop simply telling them (learners) what they need to know, and find more ways to help them experience what they need to know and lead themselves in a learning process relevant to what they have discovered.”<sup>49</sup> Vail advocates for a process of discovery, which is key to

<sup>47</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure: Exploring How God Teaches Through Adventure and Calls Us to Do the Same* (West Guilford, Ontario: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2012), Kendal, Foreword.

<sup>48</sup> Adventure N Beyond, Outdoor Activities: Experiential Education.” Accessed January 19, 2006. [http://www.anb.co.za/outdoor\\_education.htm](http://www.anb.co.za/outdoor_education.htm) as sited by Dunning, Kendal 16%.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Vail, *Learning as a Way of Being* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 134 as sited by Dunning, 16%.

experiential/adventure learning. Laying a foundation for his writing, Dunning quotes John Eldredge saying, “Life is not a problem to be solved; it is an adventure to be lived.”<sup>50</sup> This represents the heart of adventure as lifestyle. One’s perspective and anticipation of life determines if something will produce anxiety or produce expectation and adventure.

A clear strength of the book is in how Dunning defines key terms such as Bible-based strategy, leaders, design and guide, controlled risk experiences, etc. The most compelling definition describes Christian Adventure as “a Bible-based strategy that leaders use to design and guide controlled risk experiences where people are encouraged to say ‘yes’ to God.”<sup>51</sup> The absence of language to describe experiencing God is evident in the definition. A preferable definition might speak of adventure as best used to bring people into an experience of God’s “yes” for them which is what encourages a “yes” in return.

The crux of the book is its use of biblical passages to build a theological case for adventure. Dunning asserts at least 105 biblical examples can be found that fit his criteria for adventure learning experiences including “the Pentateuch (17 times), Old Testament history (42 times), the major and minor prophets (11 times), the Gospels (25 times), Acts (9 times); and even an example in the epistles.”<sup>52</sup> The use of Scripture, though often theologically stretched, clearly displays adventure is not the invention of modern man but God’s idea. The book combines theological investigation into Scripture with practical

<sup>50</sup> John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 200 as sited by Dunning, Introduction.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, Introduction.

<sup>52</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, 13.

adventure practices to highlight methods of learning which include: learning by telling (lectures, stories, parables, illustrations, object lessons, rhetorical questions); learning by facilitating (mentoring, discussion, guided questions, and leader processing an observation, experience, or adventure); learning by thinking (without leader processing observations or experiences); and learning by doing (self-discovery with experimentation and experience and adventure without leader processing).<sup>53</sup>

Dunning captures the essence of Christian adventure presenting four necessary elements: risking, trusting, testing and affirming. The original Italian and Spanish origin of the word risk is an unsure outcome with potential rewards. Dunning contends that God uses risk as a teaching tool. Risk places a person in uncertain situations that demand they trust. It exposes the risk-taker, producing a dependent vulnerability. This is the intent of adventure, which is uniquely tied to risk, and risk by definition is adventure. Adventure is purposed to demand risk, which results in trust, another key component in Christian Adventure. Dunning argues every example of biblical adventure “involves trust in one way or another; even if it is not specifically mentioned, it is usually clearly implied.”<sup>54</sup> Trust and risk also appear to be intrinsically connected. One is unlikely to truly risk without trust while the result of risk is often a deeper trust and greater willingness to risk again. It is similar to the idea of testimony. Testimony, the experience of what God has done, often provides the courage to risk. Testimony therefore, produces the belief that God will, in fact, act in the future as he has in the past.

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<sup>53</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, Foreword.

<sup>54</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, 29.

This leads to the third element of Christian adventure – testing. Dunning makes a case that leaders and educators often shy away from the idea of testing because they do not want someone to experience failure. However, Christian adventure celebrates the courage to risk. One's willingness to risk, therefore, is the measurement of success regardless of the outcome. Testing also creates an environment that exposes the things hidden and brings to the surface the places in a person's life that need to be transformed.

Dunning expresses another crucial element of Christian Adventure as affirming role of the Holy Spirit. He contends that “the Holy Spirit is involved in all phases of the experiential cycle . . . His multiple roles within us perfectly meet our need for new resources at each step of change.”<sup>55</sup> With this in mind, Christian adventure leaders need to be intentionally aware not only of the group, but also to the activity and revelation of the Holy Spirit. The facilitator should be committed, through the course of adventure, to connect the group to the Holy Spirit as well. In this way, the individual's experience of adventure is intrinsically tied to participation in the life of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Through these elements Dunning hopes adventure experiences will be more than recreational fun but will have its final measure expressed in the transformation produced in the adventurer. Dunning quotes Hendricks, author of *Living by the Book*, who harshly, yet accurately, describes non-transformative learning saying, “Observation plus interpretation without application equals abortion.”<sup>56</sup> This equates to theoretical knowledge, which gives the allusion of learning, but results in trivial understanding rather

<sup>55</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, 38.

<sup>56</sup> Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991), 283-284 as cited by Dunning, 18.

than experiential knowing. One of the best quotes from Dunning speaks to the heart of this project and directly addresses the idea of transformation. “It is not our responsibility to transform people; rather it is our responsibility to try to create an environment that makes change more likely to happen.”<sup>57</sup> This project argues for the intentional creation of environments with the positioning of participants in mind to in order to generate opportunities for life changing experiences resulting in authentic discipleship. This is the goal of Christian Adventure and the God who invented it.

### *Wilderness*

*Christian Outdoor Leadership: Theology, Theory, and Practice*, written by Ashely Denton, presents a consistent and compelling case expressing, “When Jesus taught, he was not interested in giving people information. Rather he gave them himself.”<sup>58</sup> Denton argues this was a combination of Jesus’ experiential style of teaching and the setting in which the people learned, the wilderness. He believes both of these contributed to their transformation. While most teaching today takes place indoors, in classrooms, lecture halls and auditoriums, Jesus took his followers on adventurous journeys, declaring and demonstrating the Kingdom of God in natural settings. Often, risky and disorienting wilderness experiences produced the most dramatic transformation.

Denton describes the heart of his theology of wilderness transformation with the words “tempo, terrain, timing, trials, trust and training.”<sup>59</sup> Tempo describes the rhythm of

<sup>57</sup> Bruce Dunning, *God of Adventure*, Kendal, 19.

<sup>58</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership: Theology, Theory, and Practice* (Fort Collins, CO: Smooth Stone Publishing, 2011), 36.

<sup>59</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 49.

Jesus ministry. Terrain and timing describe “the physical setting of the wilderness and the timing in which teaching occurs.”<sup>60</sup> Trials refer to the character developing tests that take place in the wilderness. Trust is established in the wilderness through a dependency created by the context. Finally, the wilderness provides an elaborate laboratory for leadership training.<sup>61</sup> Denton contends the wilderness provides an atmosphere that encourages “our vulnerability . . . which leads to transformation.”<sup>62</sup>

Although Denton is obviously a skilled and experienced practitioner, the greatest strength of his writing is in his recognition of the necessity of a credible theological foundation for wilderness both as a metaphorical condition and a physical context. It is essential to develop this theme so his readers can relate their own experiences in the wilderness to those experiences expressed in Scripture. Denton describes the physical wilderness as “any place where the natural creation dominates the landscape.”<sup>63</sup> Wilderness is, therefore, a place set apart from civilization and the comforts of everyday existence. Denton sites several passages of profound transformation that take place in a wilderness setting and argues that the God who is about transforming people’s lives loves to do so in settings that put “his people back in equilibrium with his intended design.”<sup>64</sup> This emphasizes the necessity for the believer to experience frequent times of retreat in the wilderness because their ears are once again tuned to hear the voice of the One who still speaks. Though life is often lived in the valley, the mountain-top experience allows a

<sup>60</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 50.

<sup>61</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 86.

<sup>63</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 55.

<sup>64</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 61.

vision and perspective of the glory and majesty of God rekindling a hopeful descent back into life. Denton deepens this point with poignant quote from St. Augustine:

Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it. Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead He set before your eyes the things that He made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?<sup>65</sup>

God makes Himself known through His creation. Yet how often is a sunset observed or a sunrise appreciated? How regularly is the Spring scent savored or the sweet taste of fresh fruit treasured? How many breaths breathed are taken for granted and the songs of the song bird go unnoted? The wilderness truly has capacity to capture a heart with creation and return it rightfully to the Creator.

Denton asserts wilderness encounters with God are: “physical and spiritual experiences,<sup>66</sup> places of testing to produce transformation,<sup>67</sup> opportunities for challenge and adventure,<sup>68</sup> trust-building experiences,<sup>69</sup> break down barriers and remove spiritual blinders,<sup>70</sup> and serve as a spiritual pre-requisite for influential leadership.”<sup>71</sup> Although Denton expresses the core of his writings best by saying, “The wilderness is a special place for transformation, not just a metaphor for life.”<sup>72</sup> The book continues to reveal practical suggestions for leading outdoor adventure and the power of his writing is the

<sup>65</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 91.

<sup>66</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 106.

<sup>67</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 105.

<sup>68</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 111

<sup>69</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 113.

<sup>70</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 123.

<sup>71</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 130.

<sup>72</sup> Ashley Denton, *Christian Outdoor Leadership*, 93.

description of transformation so often taking place in the wilderness. The applicable insights and storytelling all point to the same conclusion. The context of learning is almost as important as the content. God used and continues to use setting as a powerful catalyst for change in the human experience. To ignore the atmosphere of education is to undermine the clear example portrayed by Jesus who was an experiential teacher and who taught most often in an outdoor setting.

### *Culture*

*Building a Discipleship Culture*, written by Mike Breen, contends churches are not built in order to make disciples; rather, disciples are made and thus churches are built. The book argues that church is the effect of discipleship and not the cause. Therefore, the narrative of the book is centered upon the reoccurring question of how disciples are made. Certainly making disciples is at the heart of Christian ministry and multiplication. Breen believes Jesus' ministry centered upon the practice of discipleship saying, "Jesus model for seeing heaven colliding into earth, for seeing the Kingdom of God advance in community, for seeing the world put to rights and people becoming Christians, was discipleship."<sup>73</sup> Breen expresses Jesus' desire to accomplished the task of discipleship, teaching the disciples to "DO and BE like him" effectively enough to forever alter human history.<sup>74</sup>

Though the book talks abstractly about being like Jesus and doing what He did as a definition for discipleship it never truly addresses the supernatural attributes displayed

<sup>73</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People the Way Jesus Did* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 12.

<sup>74</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 14.

in miracles, signs and wonders. Even though Breen promotes the idea that it is, in part, by the God's Spirit that Christ likeness is realized, the concepts of power, authority and impartation are almost entirely ignored. What the book emphasizes, therefore, in disciple making are meaningful and well thought out strategies, which can mostly be accomplished without divine exchange or empowerment.

Breen differentiates between three predominant learning styles:

"Classroom/Lecture passing on of information; Apprenticeship; and Immersion."<sup>75</sup>

Rightly, the book articulates the inadequacy of head knowledge and argues for the necessity of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship emphasizes the importance of modeling something that moves a person past the abstract and into tangible real world application. Immersion becomes the next step in the learning process, which depends on being in the middle of the environment being discovered. The strength of this section of the book is in its recognition of the fallacy of most churches and the structure of their discipleship process. "If I can just get the right information into their heads, if they can just think about it the right way, then they will become more like Jesus."<sup>76</sup> The expectation that enough of the right information produces transformation is simply not true. Breen contends, "Discipleship isn't a random assortment of facts and propositions and behaviors, discipleship is something that is you to the core and is completely incarnated in you."<sup>77</sup> Still, churches have centered the vast majority of their discipleship processes on classroom/lecture style teaching. The author does mention Jesus preaching, healing, and casting out demons and sending the twelve out to do the same (though only once in

<sup>75</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 26.

<sup>77</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 28.

the book) as an example of apprenticing. Again, it is good that this is mentioned however, the book stops short of concluding the ministry and likeness of Jesus is still available for believers today.

The next section of the book introduces three keys to developing a discipleship culture: “information; imitation; and innovation.”<sup>78</sup> While the author again indicates the supernatural was available to the twelve by mentioning the greater things, the book of Acts and the early church, they again stop short of the logical conclusion that these things are still possible for modern day disciples. Rather, Breen contends, “Language should be the DNA of Jesus’ teachings, Scripture, leadership, mission and discipleship.”<sup>79</sup> Certainly language is a significant shaping force to culture, worldview and conceptual understandings, however, the DNA of the Christian life is the Holy Spirit which now lives in every believer and has the potential to empower them, not only to be transformed but also, to do the things Jesus did. His Holy Spirit is the source of our being and doing. This concept far exceeds proper or consistent language but rather, has its roots in the promise of the outpouring of God’s Spirit on everyone.

The remainder of the book is predominately detailed by a practical discussion of seven different shapes that the authors connect to diverse strategies for being and making disciples. These seven shapes and their correlating approaches are useful and insightful. These shapes include a circle, triangle, semi-circle, square, pentagon, heptagon, and octagon.<sup>80</sup> The authors believe these shapes are like rabbit holes, which are simple at the

<sup>78</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 41-42.

<sup>79</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 51-53.

surface yet are capable of taking the reader more deeply into relationship with Jesus as they are applied.

The first shape, the circle, is connected to spiritual breakthrough. At its center, the circle emphasizes hearing God's voice and responding to it. This author contends this value is not only the starting point in Christian discipleship but is the central theme of the whole of Scripture. Breen suggests the continual question for the Christian is, "What is God saying to me, and what am I going to do about it?"<sup>81</sup> The second shape is the triangle and is connected to a relational way of life that seeks to stay connected to God, the church and those who do not yet know Jesus. The third shape is the semi-circle. This shape represents the balance of work and rests in the context of both individual and corporate disciplines. The fourth shape is the square and symbolizes the process Jesus used in discipling others. The fifth shape is the pentagon. This shape is tied to the fivefold ministry in the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The sixth shape shared is the hexagon and is used to discover deeper connection to the Father by learning the Lord's Prayer. The seventh shape is the heptagon, which is representative of how to participate and contribute to a community of believers. The final shape discussed in the book is the octagon. This shape is connected to moving toward mission, discovering people of peace and making disciples that make disciples.<sup>82</sup>

Overall, the book is well laid out and fairly comprehensive in giving a detailed, practical and innovative approach to both walk in personal discipleship and begin to disciple others. The book was also written with sequential purpose with each concept and

<sup>81</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture*, 51-53.

shape moving naturally into the one that follows. The greatest strength of the book is that it is not promoting a new program but rather, a new paradigm. The difficulty with programs is their dependence upon specific contexts, communities and circumstances. Where programs generally fall is in their failure to move from event to lifestyle.

The weakness of the book is two-fold. First, while the book moves away from theory and promotes practice, it also tends to complicate what can be a quite simple process. Second, while the book values moving past information alone and endorses a form of discipleship which seeks to become like Jesus, it stops short in its understanding what this truly means. Christlikeness is more than developing patterns, principles and practices. Christlikeness is becoming increasingly like Jesus who was a constant proponent and practitioner of the impossible. Jesus' mission and His mandate to His followers was consistent; to heal the sick, cleanse the leper, cast out demons and raise the dead. Jesus modeled this for His followers and gave them the authority to do the same. It is in the context of talking about these kinds of miracles that Jesus declares, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (NIV, John 14:12). When the practice of Christlikeness is separated from the power of Christlikeness, discipleship is doomed to depend upon manmade forms, strategies and shapes to accomplish what can only be made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit within each believer. Any definition of discipleship that devalues or disbelieves the opportunity for every Christian to do the things Jesus Himself did is a vast reduction of the gospel message and misunderstands Kingdom purpose.

## Conclusion

The heartbeat of transformation is experience. The transformative power of experience is recognized in the fields of education, philosophy, psychology, sociology, theology, and practitioners of Christian phenomenology. The collective work in these fields creates a compelling case for the life-changing influence of experience, encounter and adventure. Clearly, there is not enough emphasis or opportunity for these transformative elements in churches and Christian communities. As long as information reigns as the assumed transformational agent, a staggering shortage of Christians truly following Jesus will continue, rather than simply agreeing with him.

This project addresses these concerns and proposes the core practices of Christian community should be to seek intentionally experiencing God through divine encounters. This project believes that adventure can be one of many possibilities that position participants for to be profoundly and radically forever changed. This transformation, in the context of Christian discipleship, is always aimed at producing men and women who look and act more like Jesus. The repetitious sentiments from so many fields of study supporting the necessity for experience in learning produce a unified voice shouting for an innovative form of discipleship, ravenously consumed with becoming more like Jesus.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

“Aslan is a lion – *the* Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he – quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” “That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.” “Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **The Problem**

The problem addressed by this project is predominately epistemological. The unseen epidemic presiding over most churches and Christian academic institutions is the presupposition that information equals transformation. Most churches and other Christian educational contexts are almost entirely based on the epistemological belief that if enough of the right information is communicated, then lives will be changed. Sermons sit as the centerpiece in western churches affirming the continuing impact of the Enlightenment and rationalistic roots of modernity. Most churches equate agreeing with propositional theology with discipleship and an intellectual ascension to theological theories with transformation. This emphasis often results in churches or classrooms filled with theorists. Theorists are those who observe information from a safe and objective

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (New York, NY: Collier Books, 1950), 75-76.

distance, but whose lives are not changed by what they know. This approach mistakes knowing about Jesus with knowing Him and the ability to talk about what Jesus did with actually doing what He did, and dare it be said, even greater things. Learning environments that emphasize information alone make little room for participants to encounter God and live with a realistic expectation of becoming like Jesus, which is the essence of discipleship. The desperate need of post-modern Christian faith is to discover meaningful contexts that marry information and experience so that God is known, not simply known about.

### **Hypothesis**

The non-directional hypothesis for the project is as follows: The hypothesis of this Adventure Discipleship program proposes participants will report a greater sense of intimacy, authority, and adventure through an experiential understanding of their identity, calling and mission. The Adventure Discipleship Model believes discipleship is depicted through what Jesus modeled in Mark 3 when He called the disciples into the mountains to be with Him, told them who they were, and what they were called to do, then sent them to the metropolis to preach and gave them authority to cast out demons. The intent of the project was to create a discipleship model that better positioned participants to experience God through transformative encounter and equip them, in participation with the Holy Spirit, to do the things Jesus did.

### **Purpose**

The practical purposes of this ministry project was tested at Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center and the surrounding county. This researcher contends that it is a person's experience with God in the context of intentional discipleship that produces the most radical and lasting transformation. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that people are positioned in such a way as to be available to these life-changing encounters. Paramount to the project itself is an underlying biblical, historical and theological understanding that demonstrates its consistency with the biblical description of discipleship, historical perspectives, and practices in experiential learning environments. These are connected to discipleship and an epistemological theology of pneumatology and divine encounter. The informational content of the project, though important, was secondary in the sense that it followed and explained the experiential aspects of Kingdom living.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the author was that of leader, facilitator and teacher. The author designed and facilitated the combination of experience, exploration, information, impartation and implementation. The author realizes his biased participation as one invested in the participants with a specific desired outcome in mind, that is, through Adventure Discipleship participants would become more like Jesus. Creswell confirms researcher bias observing, "Researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. They also

interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background.”<sup>2</sup>

With that said, the form of the research evolved through careful observation of the participants and their own subjective self-reporting. The research therefore, is discovered through the course of the experience and interpreted through careful investigation and coding. Though the author's bias due to specific worldview and interest certainly play a role in data analysis, this author is unable to detect any specific biases that could compromise his judgment or analysis of the data.<sup>3</sup>

### **Primary Participants**

The primary participants of the project were comprised of six Tuolumne county couples from five different local churches. The participants ranged in age from early twenties to mid-fifties and report being Christians from one year to more than thirty. The participating couples came from broad Christian experience and background from cessationist to charismatic. Each participant chose an alias for the purpose of anonymity.

It should also be noted that five of the six couples were involved in full time or part time ministry. Each individual and couple was able to participate fully and were in no way hindered or disqualified due to previous or current theological convictions. The couples came into Adventure Discipleship through a series of events one could only consider as authored by the Lord. The common threads tying these couples together were their local context, adventurous spirits, and insatiable hunger and love for Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup>John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall), 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 177.

## Research Design and Methodology

In his book, *Research Design*, John Creswell describes research as “a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue.”<sup>4</sup> These steps and approaches are varied and are often dictated by the type of research itself. Creswell clearly defines three general steps and approaches. In describing the steps Creswell states, “At a general level, research consists of three steps: pose a question; collect data to answer the question and present an answer to the question.”<sup>5</sup> The first step in this process, pose a question, often determines the type of methodological approaches that follow.

In addition to these three steps, there are also three general approaches: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approach. In the book *Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Scott W. Vanderstoep and Deirdre D. Johnston describe the difference between quantitative and qualitative approaches. They contend, “In general, quantitative research specifies numerical assignment to the phenomena under study, whereas qualitative research produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomena.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, quantitative research is characterized by numbers and deductive closed-ended questions, while qualitative research is characterized by words and inductive open-ended questions.

<sup>4</sup> John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Creswell, *Educational Research*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Scott W. Vanderstoep and Deirdre D. Johnston, *Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 7.

Quantitative research is generally measured objectively and analyzed. This type of research has a much larger sampling than qualitative research. Qualitative research on the other hand, is better suited for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”<sup>7</sup> This type of research is narrative in nature and often depends on interpretation of observations and interviews. Though not as strictly statistical, qualitative research still qualifies data using such terms like rarely or hardly as well as many, most, often, and frequently. While many researchers prefer the facts exposed by quantitative research, qualitative research is growing in popularity and has gained appreciation and approval as it “provides a richer and more in-depth understanding of the population under study.”<sup>8</sup>

The strength and weakness of the qualitative approach is the emphasis on and interpretation of experience. While sometimes subjective, these results often create more compelling stories than the dry statistical data produced by quantitative research. One noticeable disadvantage is noted by Vanderstoep and Johnston who observe, “The sample sizes are usually small and non-random, and therefore the findings may not generalize to the larger population from which the sample was drawn.”<sup>9</sup> These approaches, like the steps above, are often dictated by the presenting problem, the questions being asked, type of study and the kind of research being done.

More often than not, research contains elements of both types of methodologies. This combination is referred to as the mixed-method approach. Researcher Raewyn

<sup>7</sup> Vanderstoep and Johnston, *Methods for Everyday Life*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Vanderstoep and Johnston, *Methods for Everyday Life*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Vanderstoep and Johnston, *Methods for Everyday Life*, 8.

Connell contends that both approaches “coexist in almost any piece of research.”<sup>10</sup> Raewyn argues, “What makes a piece of research quantitative or qualitative is the degree of saturation of these two elements within that research.”<sup>11</sup> While a blend of approaches will be engaged by this research, the majority of its meaningful results will be discovered qualitatively.

Because of the author’s context and research design, a case study approach of inquiry was used. A case study approach is intent on developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases using numerous sources of data collection to discover descriptions, themes, and assertions. Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack describe this approaching saying, “Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts.”<sup>12</sup> Baxter and Jack continue saying, “Suggestions on how to bind a case include: a) by time and place (b) time and activity; and (c) by definition and context.”<sup>13</sup> Binding the case ensures its scope remains reasonable. Each of these binding methodologies have contributed to the final approach to this case study.

Due to the case study primarily being an exploration of the participant’s experiences, it also has phenomenological elements. According to Creswell, phenomenological research “describes the lived experiences of individuals about a

<sup>10</sup> Karyn Cooper and Robert E. White, *Qualitative Research in the Post-Modern Era: Contexts of Qualitative Research* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Cooper and White, *Qualitative Research in the Post-Modern Era*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report*, 13, no. 4 (Dec 2008): 544.

<sup>13</sup> Baxter and Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology,” 546.

phenomenon as described by participants.”<sup>14</sup> Although this type of research often depends on subjective self-reporting, it offers the evaluator the opportunity to explore individual and shared experiences in an attempt to draw substantial and meaningful narrative conclusions about those experiences. In the book, *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice*, Marguerite G. Lodico describes phenomenological research as an “attempt to capture the ‘essence’ of the human experience.”<sup>15</sup> The particular research here, which explores an experiential epistemology, seeks to capture the essence of the human experience in participation with the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the pro-active research method will be integrated into the plan of this project. In Jarred D. Fenlason’s dissertation about the subject of discipleship, he refers to the work done by William Myers on research in ministry and the pro-active research method. Myers describes the pro-active research method as a purposeful engagement in qualitative research while pro-actively moving toward transformation.<sup>16</sup> According to Myers, this method “positively emphasizes the subjective involvement of the researcher, promotes community interaction as part of all research, and seeks ‘critical transformation’ as a grounding premise.”<sup>17</sup> In this case, the researcher is intentionally pursuing change in the participants involved in the study. Transformation is the key quality being assessed in this qualitative research and this researcher is intimately involved in every aspect of positioning participants for life altering encounters. The overall effort of this project is to

<sup>14</sup> Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Marguerite G. Lodico, Dean T. Spaulding and Katherine H. Voegtle, *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 16

<sup>16</sup> William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry*, 3rd ed. (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers, 2001), 29.

<sup>17</sup> William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry*, 32.

implement over opportunity for transformation while assessing its success through a myriad of data collection methods.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Information alone rarely results in life change but discipleship is an experiential endeavor with a movement from intimacy (being with Jesus) to authority (the ability to do what Jesus did) to adventure (doing what Jesus did). This movement was directly connected to discoveries of identity (who God says I am), calling (what I was designed to do in partnership with God), and mission (my current assignment from God). In intimacy one discovers identity, in developed authority one understands partnership with God and gains a sense of calling, and in adventure one discerns the specific context of mission. The hypothesis was tested and the data was triangulated to validate results by comparison of pre and post-surveys, focus groups, and journaling.

On the first day of the Adventure Discipleship program, participants were given a pre-survey. The first two questions were intended to disclose approximate age, how long a participant has been a Christian and what church they currently attend. The next fifteen questions were Likert style questions scaled from 1-10, which evaluated the three key areas in the participant's spiritual life. The first five of those questions address intimacy with God and personal identity. The second five questions address participation with God and personal authority and calling. The final five of these questions addressed perception and practice of the Christian life as risk and adventure. The last nine questions on the pre-survey were fill-in-the-blank and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions

addressed identity, calling, mission, and the nature of discipleship. The same survey was given three weeks after the conclusion of Adventure Discipleship.

The second form of data collection was three focus groups comprised of four participants each. The focus group consisted of eight to ten open-ended questions and pursued deeper experiential detail and the tangible fruit of those experiences. The groups were divided with couples in different groups so that the researcher would gain a full and unguarded reflection within each group while being able to compare the three groups for consistency and variation. The group discussion was recorded, transcribed and reviewed for common developing themes and positive shared experiences.

The final form of data collection was also the most comprehensive. Journals were kept and updated consistently throughout the forty-day experience. These journals were used to record frequent reflections during the adventure retreat and were places of regular recording throughout the six weeks of weekly gatherings. The journals were used to record experiences, emotions, realizations, and to summarize important areas of growth and challenge. Like the discussion groups, the journals provided ample material for review and analysis.

The final step was a collective and comparative analysis of the data for coding and discerning consistent significant outcomes. The pre and post-survey was compared for each participant. Though the surveys revealed meaningful material, Adventure Discipleship's most impactful results were discovered through the narratives expressed in the focus group interviews and extensive journaling. These three sources were carefully evaluated for indicators of success and common themes. Particularly important to the research was the ability to accurately measure and articulate the participant's experiences,

emotions, revelations and the resulting fruit from their participation in Adventure Discipleship.

The researcher also conducted interviews with leaders within Adventure/Experiential education, retreats, camps and schools. The interviewees were practitioners, authors, facilitators and adventurers. This information helped further shape the researcher's hypothesis as well as provided additional structure and emphasis for the adventures themselves. In addition, the interviews added personal testimony of experts in both adventure and theology giving greater credibility and weight to the project.

### Coding

Coding is a method of shaping and sorting data. Codes allow the researcher to assemble and organize data thus capturing and creating a clear picture of what is happening. An important piece of developing meaningful codes is firstly to determine a captivating storyline. Of particular interest was to determine how Adventure Discipleship's flow (experience, exploration, information, impartation, and implementation) impacted participants. The overall intent of these forms of data collection was to determine if group members experienced tangible transformation in the areas of intimacy, authority and adventure as well as a deeper practical understanding of their identity, calling and mission. In addition to these areas of emphasis, indicators for commonalities in the participant's experiences, emotions and overall outcomes were analyzed.

This research contends the foundation of discipleship is becoming like Jesus. This is not simply defined by one's church attendance but rather, the palpable lifestyle of

adventure that is marked by participation with the Holy Spirit in doing the things Jesus did. The ultimate purpose of this project was not to empirically substantiate an assumption. Rather, it was to tell the compelling story of transformation, subjective as it may be, in the lives of the participants. Therefore, the overarching indicator of success for this project was to answer the question: As a result of your participation in Adventure Discipleship, are you more like Jesus?

## **Project Overview**

### *Phase I*

Adventure Discipleship was broken down into two distinct phases, which highlight the movement from mountain to metropolis. The first phase of the program was a three day adventure retreat that began Thursday evening March 20-22, 2015, at Heavenly Hills, a forty acre Christian Camp and Retreat Center located in the Sierra/Nevada Mountains just north of Yosemite National Park near the village of Twain Harte, CA. The retreat focused on intimacy with Jesus as the primary tenant of discipleship. During the retreat the twelve group members, comprised of six couples, participated in an intentionally sequenced series of adventure experiences intended to position them for intimate encounter with Jesus and to provide opportunity to hear from Him.

Participants enjoyed rhythms of experience, exploration, information, impartation and implementation. Experiences varied and included the following adventures: couples jumping into a river of fresh snow melt; a low ropes team building challenge at night; an individual visualization and listening exercise; an experiential praise and worship; a six

mile hike in the high Sierras with medium difficulty to a destination of waterfalls; another listening exercise; a group prophetic listening and sharing experiment; another experiential praise and worship experience; group games; another low ropes team building challenge; another listening exercise; a group treasure hunt; and a final experiential worship event and impartation. These adventures were specifically sequenced and intertwined with group reflection, journaling, teaching times and impartation. The goal of the retreat was to position participants to practice His presence and gain a deeper experiential understanding of the being nature of discipleship.

### *Phase 2*

The six subsequent weeks and five gatherings were intended to move participants from the mountain and into the metropolis. These gatherings took place near the town of Sonora and followed a similar rhythm. Participants gathered and were immediately given an adventure assignment. These provided opportunities for participants to participate with Jesus in both declaration and demonstration of the Kingdom. These assignments sent them into various areas of the city and were sequenced specifically to create increased vulnerability and risk each week. The adventure outline for the weeks were as follows: week one, love; week two, honor; week three, prophecy; week four, healing; week five, off; week six, love.

Participants were sent out on these adventures as couples or in pairs of couples. These adventure experiences were intended to produce a sense of vulnerability in the group members making them available to transformative divine encounter. The participants would return after an hour and spend the next hour and a half together. Each

week's gathering followed the same sequence and flow. These adventure experiences were followed by exploration, a combination of reflections and discussions facilitated by the researcher within larger and smaller group contexts exploring the events, emotions, and results of the experiences. These explorations were followed by information, biblical teaching by the researcher providing a deep theological foundation, which brings insight and engages participants at the point of their experience. Information was followed by impartation, the spiritual exchange from one person to another through prayer. Impartation was followed by implementation, applying what was experienced and empowered into the most intimate places of life (one's home) so that lifestyle evolves as spiritual gifts/fruit is nurtured. The Adventure Discipleship experience concluded on Monday April 27. It was followed by a final celebration and data collection Saturday May 16. The group members returned to Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center.

### **Importance of the Study**

This study was important because the desired outcome was to transform participants who would, in turn, become agents of transformation firstly in their own homes, secondly their churches, and thirdly the county. The project was significant because it sought Christ-likeness and then nurtured it, most immediately, in the most intimate places of life so that being like Jesus would not be relegated to an event but revealed as a lifestyle invading every aspect, every context and every circumstance of a person's existence. The research was also valuable because it railed against western

rationalism and reintroduced a process completely dependent upon relationship with a person rather than reasoning through mere principles.

This researcher believes the return to this form of discipleship has the potential to impact not only local families and congregations but also to make deep inroads in the Christian educational constructs of North American academic culture. The unique importance of the process is expressed in its reversal of modern learning processes made possible only in the economy of grace and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. To begin with experience and move into exploration of that experience only then to arrive at explanation makes vulnerable not only those participating but also the entire process. It demands a dependence on Jesus doing something someone cannot do on their own for the format to be fruitful. Adventure and risk therefore, are inherent to the entire endeavor. It is a new look at an ancient approach and has the opportunity to produce transformation not only in individuals but systems alike. Finally, the pursuit of this project was to position people to simply be with Jesus and in being with Him, to become like Him.

### **Adventure Discipleship**

The first section of investigation, Mountain to Metropolis, explores the effects of certain movements within Adventure Discipleship. This section expresses insights into the processes of AD's movement from the mountain to the metropolis; a movement which goes beyond mere pragmatism and reflects a biblical form of discipleship. This section also provides in depth details about this distinctive process with participant feedback and reflection as received through focus groups and journals. The narrative expressed in this phase highlights the calling and sending nature of discipleship as well as

the necessity for followers of Jesus to go beyond information and truly experience the reality of becoming like Him through the practice of being with Him.

The second section of investigation, Intimacy, Authority, and Adventure, begins with a deep investigation of three primary areas: intimacy, authority and adventure. These concepts represent broad categories of emphasis throughout the project. As discussed briefly above, the idea of intimacy represents being with Jesus and is the birthplace of understanding personal identity. The concept of authority is connected to one's ability and right to do what Jesus did and is coupled with a greater grasp of calling. The final category, adventure, is one of perspective as well as practice and promotes actually doing the things Jesus did, which often leads to a deeper revelation of mission. These results are produced from a combination of triangulated data gleaned from pre and post surveys, journals, and focus group interviews.

The third section of investigation, Insights and Observations, concludes with insights into unexpected areas of transformation through narratives and observations. Highlighted in this section is Adventure Discipleship's unique experiential formula moving from experience to explanation to information; and the practical impact of moving from impartation to implementation in the home. This section paints a broad experiential picture of the group's experiences, which tell a compelling story of their transformative encounters with the Lord and their journey toward Jesus.

## **Mountain to Metropolis**

### *The Mountain*

An important aspect of qualitative research is its use of naturalistic settings.<sup>18</sup> This term makes reference to the geographic location in which qualitative research takes place. It is intended to create a context where participants naturally experience the emphasis of the study. In other words, the setting becomes part of the project when it lends itself to crafting an environment that is conducive and constructive toward the overall goals of the research. In this case, the naturalistic setting is Heavenly Hills Christian Camp and Retreat Center and the Sierra/Nevada mountain range of Northern California.

This setting set the stage for adventures with God. This context was a character in the content of Adventure Discipleship (AD) constantly declaring the handiwork of the Creator of all things. In the words of Adventure Discipleship's participants, the mountains make you more available for encounter. Matt, Gabe and Hannah believe the lack of disruptions plays a significant role in creating an environment conducive to conversation with God. Matt expresses, "Being out here, it takes us away from distractions!" Gabe continues that thought saying, "I think it put us into a place of peace . . . inner tranquility." Hannah expresses the freedom from the familiar adding, "I think for me, being here quiets the noise of everything else. Even just the spiritual climate is different. It makes me feel free."

Ms. Wonderful, David, and Willy all agreed there is some intrinsic connection to God, which is gained by being in the midst of His creation. Ms. Wonderful expressed her thoughts saying, "Being outside and in nature always brings me back to a place of

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<sup>18</sup>Creswell, 175.

appreciation to be surrounded by what He made instead of what's man-made." David associated this connection to the beauty of God saying, "When we're in the mountains, the vast and overwhelming beauty of it is all so unexpected and so surprising that our eyes and our hearts are open to what God is doing around us and that gives us the perspective that we are actually with God." In thinking about the advantage of being outdoors and up the mountain, Willy reflected on His experience of God in nature saying, "I actually love being outside and seeing what He created. Out here you can see Him and that has always drawn me to the mountains. It's like when I can go, I can hear clearer and I can see what He created. It's amazing."

Amirah, an avid outdoors woman, believes there is a deep revelation of both who God is and who we are in comparison. She expressed this idea and her unguarded delight in this, her favorite setting. "I think being in the mountains gives people a sense of scale in some way. I think part of it is just for enjoyment and for us to play in because the purest moments of happiness in my life continue to be in places like this." Certainly, being outside and in nature provides an atmosphere of availability. There is both a peace and power to His presence as experienced on the mountain. This observation, however, is nothing new.

This setting is significant because there is significance to the mountain. It was the place God picked when first making covenant with His people, speaking so powerfully the people trembled and begged Moses to mediate. It provided the setting for Elijah and the battle with the prophets of Baal and the landscape from which the whisper of Godimmerged shortly after when Elijah was hiding in a cave. Jesus escaped to the mountain in order to pray all night and then later to cry out to His Father before His betrayal. It was

also a mountainous escape to which Jesus called those whom He wanted to come away with Him. In light of all the precedence, Adventure Discipleship sought to follow Jesus' lead and launch this ministry in the mountains of the Sierras by calling those chosen twelve to come away and begin by being, simply being with Jesus.

### *Adventure Retreat – Day 1*

Couples filed in over the course of a half hour and were shown to their rooms. After putting their things away they all gathered in the main dining hall where each person was given the pre-survey which they quietly filled out sitting around the collection of rectangular tables made into a large square. Once everyone had finished, I welcomed the group and asked about everyone's heart. A heart check-in is something we frequently do, in all sorts of settings, which gives individuals in a group the opportunity to reflect on their predominate emotions and express them in the safety of community. As we went from one participant to another, we heard words like: anxious, nervous, uncertain, and scared as well as ready, open, excited and expectant. Once our hearts were exposed, I taught briefly on the nature of discipleship.

"Discipleship is more about being than doing," I said. "So this week, you will consistently be placed in position to 'be' with Jesus. In fact, everything we do over the course of the next several days is intended to create an opportunity for deeper intimacy in that relationship so that, in being with Jesus, we can become like Him."

After the initial welcome, and only an hour into the retreat, we set off on our first adventure. With water bottles, snacks, and our journals stashed in each of our backpacks, we started our walk down from Heavenly Hill's property and to hike upstream along the

banks of the Stanislaus River. It was an adventure, so naturally I made it difficult. Over the next forty-five minutes the group climbed over fallen trees, up and down steep embankments and jumped from rock to rock crossing over the river and back again until finally we reached our destination, a collection of enormous granite rocks at the base of a gorgeous waterfall.

Here, the group spread out and began reading and writing in their journals. The text each read came from John 13 and described an exchange between Jesus and Peter which culminated in Peter's request for Jesus to not only wash his feet but also his head and his hands. The group continued by answering a series of questions about experiences they had enjoyed which brought them closer to God; barriers they had struggled with which stifled intimacy with Jesus' and lies they had believed about themselves, which kept them from the depth of relationship they desired with Him. The journaling concluded with one final question: "What is keeping you, right now, from being all in with Jesus?"

Once everyone had finished, the group gathered and I addressed them. "I want to give you an opportunity today," I said, "To make a prophetic declaration. It is one thing to say, 'I'm all in' and it is entirely different to declare it with an action. So today, in this moment, if you are all in with Jesus and ready to receive whatever He has for you this weekend and beyond, I want to invite you, as couples, to step to the edge of this rock and simply jump in." Immediately, disbelief flooded the group and was expressed through groans and nervous laughter. It was, after all, an overcast day in the middle of March and the water pouring over and around these rocks was fresh snow melt. It was not until my bride and I stepped to the edge of the rock, jumped and disappeared under the rushing

waters that each participant understood what they had gotten themselves into. We surfaced to the sound applause, cheers and whoops from our group. Then, slowly but surely, each couple, one at a time and hand in hand walked up to the edge of the rock and together declared they were all in.

Within three hours of the start of the retreat, this collection of strangers were deeply connected. They had begun by sharing their hearts and had finished with a powerful declaration together. They were all in with Jesus, and each other. We continued going deep the first day with a good dinner, a team building initiative on our low ropes course and a time of invitation for Jesus to reveal and release us from any barriers that might still stand in the way of intimacy with Him. We continued with the men and women in different groups as we shared the profound revelations we had received from the Holy Spirit. We wrapped up the day with an hour of worship in the darkness of the dining room. It had been a good start.

### *Adventure Retreat – Day 2*

The second day began with adventure. One of the subtle yet important features of the weekend was that no one had a schedule but me. This kept the group at a place of uncertainty, vulnerability, and dependence. To simulate what so often happens in our walk with God, I only gave them enough information to prepare them for the next adventure. After a quick breakfast we prepared a lunches, packed our bags and drove up the pass to a scenic and beautiful high alpine lake. After some check-ins and journaling we began our hike. This hike was much longer and at a dramatically increased elevation

than the one we had done the day before so we stopped frequently to catch our breaths and listen to the Lord.

As we hiked toward our spectacular destination, we read some from John 10 and paired up to talk about how each one of us hear the Shepherd's voice. Our conversations were rich and deeper connections naturally occurred as we shared along the trail. We reached our destination around noon and were amazed at the beauty of this intricate series of cliffs, waterfalls, and swimming holes. We spread out on the rocks with our lunches and journals and began listening. The instructions on the page were as follows.

Still your thoughts. Look at Jesus and listen for His voice (thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc.). Write down spontaneous free flowing thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc. When you feel He has finished speaking, reflect on what you heard both privately and with others. Let's start with an experiment. Find a spot alone. Ask Jesus, "What do you want to tell me about who I am?"

After bellies and pages were full, we gathered near the edge of one of the pools and explored the experience we had just enjoyed. It was remarkable to hear the elaborate insight each had received from the Lord about their identities. The group listened, encouraged, laughed, and cried together as they shared intimately with one another. After our exploration and reflection, I laid biblical foundations about the impact and importance of identity. Once we finished, we headed back down the three miles of rocks and trail. Again, the air was filled with laughter, songs, and storytelling until eventually, we reached our vehicles and headed back to Heavenly Hills.

That night we entered into a prophetic experiment intended to produce vulnerability in everyone, whether a seasoned prophet or someone who had never prophesied before. We sat in a circle, each across from our spouses, and I encouraged the group to become aware of His Presence among us. We invited the Holy Spirit and soon

He was manifesting Himself in the form of tears, laughter, and trembling. I then instructed the group to take a moment and ask the Lord how He sees the person to their left. It is important to note here that half of the group had never had this kind of encounter with the Holy Spirit and had never, at least knowingly, prophesied to anyone. Within seconds, one of our participants who had never heard from the Lord or shared a Word, put her hands on the person to her left and began expressing the Father's heart for this person with insight and accuracy. After prophesying and praying, the person who had just received gathered herself and began sharing with the person to her left.

The pattern continued and with each word of identity and subsequent prayer the group drew closer to Jesus and one another. It was particularly fascinating to see how meaningful each word was to the spouse of the one receiving it. It was beautiful to watch as they almost fell out of their chairs listening intently to what the Lord had to say to their beloved. When we concluded the experiment and everyone had heard from the Lord, shared His Word, and received it from another, the group sat in silent reverence reflecting on the deep encounter they had just experienced. We concluded the evening with another hour of worship, which saw couples singing and dancing as they held one another.

### *Adventure Retreat – Day 3*

The third day began with playtime. Shortly after breakfast the group followed me outside where we laughed, played and reflected on the freedom to have to be childlike and silly. We moved from that experience into another adventure, which connected the group even more intensely both figuratively and literally. I took a rope and tied the group together through belt loops and around waists until they were one. I then instructed the

group follow me, working together to go up hills and around trees. Once they were comfortable I changed the rules and created one new challenge after another (no one can talk, only one can see but everyone else can talk, two people cannot touch the ground, etc.) until finally everyone in the group was told they could no longer see or speak. The group grew even closer together, holding onto each other's arms, shoulders and hands as they listened for my voice. The adventure culminated as I led the blind and mute group down a steep embankment, which demanded they hold one another up to avoid catastrophe. Once down the hill, they opened their eyes and mouths and reflected on the experience. The Holy Spirit supplied meaningful dialogue and soon the group was praying, still tied together and standing in a field.

After lunch the group watched sections of a documentary highlighting present day signs, miracles and wonders happening all over the planet. Encouraged by their own recent experiences and the testimonies in the video, we moved into another time of listening. The subject was around the concept of calling and each of us asked the Lord to talk with us about what we were designed to do in partnership with Him regardless of context or circumstance. The time of listening was followed by a time of teaching, which impacted and empowered the group in the things the Lord had just spoken to them. We moved from there to our final adventure of the weekend, a treasure hunt.

The group was given a picture to begin the adventure. The challenge was not to find something in the picture but to determine the location from which the picture had been taken. Once they found the location they would find the next picture and so on. The group worked well together and excitement built as they neared the conclusion and the discovery of the treasure. The hunt ended at the peak of our property at a seating area

near a cross, which overlooked the nearby mountain ranges. Here, through piecing the pictures together with the letters on the back of each, the group uncovered the treasure, Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

Now, with the end in sight, I facilitated a conversation connecting the loose ends of the retreat and culminated in a deep teaching on power, authority, and glory. The retreat concluded with a powerful time of impartation near the cross. Several people were dramatically moved during this time of impartation as my wife and I prayed for each participant. We were all touched and tired and at last our adventure was over--or perhaps it had really only begun.

### *Reflections from the Mountain*

Months later, when asked about the value of the retreat and the importance of beginning on the mountain, the group reflected with encouraging insights and powerful perspectives. The participants of AD spoke about these life changing adventures in terms of their immediate impact and the continuing contributions the retreat had on rest of the group's experience. Shanae began by addressing the value of being physically engaged by the process saying,

For me, it was all about the power of the physical act of proclaiming that I'm all in and jumping in the water. Doing things like that made it more real for me. It was more than just me saying it or hearing it. I was saying, "Ok, let's do this!" It just made it more real and it validated it more for me that yes, I'm doing this. In that way it put us all on an even playing field where there were no egos because we were all equal in the challenges.

Ms. Wonderful also spoke about the importance of shared adventures and the bond that developed as a result of doing difficult things together.

I think that doing something that was risk-taking like the jumping in the water was a kind of bonding experience. We got to do it with a partner but we all got to make the declaration. It was great because we were like laughing with each other having all shared experience of “Oh that sucked” or “that was cool” or whatever. It allowed us to build relationships so when you asked those questions about like sharing your week and that kind of stuff, we could be vulnerable because we had learned to trust each other. I thought it was awesome and it was fun. It was really fun!

David articulated how the moments on the mountain drew the group together. His reflection painted a power picture of the importance of knowing you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. David mused,

Up on the mountain I discovered that there is great security in being and in knowing that we are being completely vulnerable. There was great security in knowing we were not alone in it. It is important to me, at a global perspective as well as a personal perspective, that there is security in knowing that we are all in this together.

Hannah spoke about how the shared encounters during the retreat gave the group courage to be open and honest with one another. The unity discovered between participants would prove to be a key component for the group’s willingness to embrace risk. She reflected,

There were so many opportunities just to be free and to be with the Lord and to experience encounter with Him. I think one practical thing was that it was a lot easier to be open with the group later because you had already bonded, connected, and shared experiences together. It’s easier to go out and take a risk with someone you are already trust.

Willy remarked on the group’s experience on the mountain and the necessity of the friendships that were formed. Willy’s insight into these connections highlighted both their instant importance as well as their long-term significance. He articulated,

The way you created the retreat you brought everybody together. It was like everybody was a piece of butter and then you put them in the microwave for 30 or 40 seconds and they all blended together, so by the end of the weekend you had a one blob. You saw people, you got to hear their testimonies, you got to receive from them, you got to give to them, and that started to build trust and

relationships. There wasn't a bunch of individual stuff. It was more like everybody came together which allowed us to do the other things on Monday. It was needed.

Amirah expressed her belief that the mountain experience created a crucial connection for the group that would serve as the foundation for everything experienced together off the mountain. Amirah reflected,

I think it was really important, especially for the Monday night experiences. A good number of them being outside of our comfort zones and like, purposefully outside of comfort zones, because we were taking risks. It was a lot more comfortable doing that having spent time with everyone beforehand and it was a lot less intimidating because of the retreat. I would have felt really intimidated the first time I met you and you came back and you were like, "Oh we prayed for this person and this person was healed," and we had some of those types of stories happen on Monday nights! Those things that happened would've been a lot more intimidating if we hadn't been able to just hang out first.

Bob shared similar thoughts as he spoke about the power of shared experiences during the retreat and how the transformation in that environment set the stage for the weeks that would follow. He argues,

Without the vulnerability, the familiarity, and the bond that was developed in that zany weird blindfolded stand-on-the-log in the middle of the night things. Without that stuff that helped bond the group, there would have never been the intimacy that allowed the honesty to come forth in the following weeks. We might have reached that point by week six rather than starting with that intimacy at week one. So by the end we might have been like, "oh we miss each other" rather than at the beginning saying, "oh thank God it's Monday again. Now we get to see each other!"

Mr. Wonderful commented on the retreat's mountainous setting and the many opportunities it provided to encounter God. The greatest value he discovered through the retreat was not in the isolated encounters but rather, the understanding that these God experiences were available not only up the mountain but also wherever we are. He pondered,

Our culture just kind of follows a pattern that you go somewhere to encounter God. So you started us off that way but then you showed how we can do this every day. You started us off enough in a familiar setting even though it was an unfamiliar way of approaching an encounter with God. We did some awesome stuff that was outside of the box, but that just added to our perspective. You then took that from the model and showed us that we can actually do this all week long. You were like, "Let me show you how to do it."

Perhaps the shortest and sweetest reflection on the retreat came from Lou Lou. As the group recounted its experiences Lou Lou smiled and laughed until sharing this beautiful nugget of inspiration when with childlike energy and enthusiasm Lou Lou said, "There was freedom. I mean all of us just came together. It was just so good!"

### *From the Mountain to the Metropolis*

The group had only been apart from one another for twenty-four hours when we gathered for the first of five weekly meetings over the course of the next six weeks. These meetings would challenge AD's adventurers to take the things they had discovered about intimacy, identity, authority and calling and implement them into the most intimate places of their lives: their homes. Their homes however, would not be the starting place. Our experiment was moving from the mountain to the metro.

### *Week 1 – Love*

The group gathered with excitement. Not sure what the night would hold, each couples uncertainty no longer equaled anxiety but rather, everyone's heart was filled with expectation. The group gathered on the large porch of one of the couple's homes near the town of Sonora, the hub of Tuolumne County. After welcoming the group, I asked each person what they would be doing if they were in town rather than standing there together.

Some in the group mentioned eating, some running errands and others said they would be feeding their coffee addiction at the nearest Starbucks. "Good," I said. "You've got an hour. Go with your spouse and do what you would normally do and then come back." The group looked at me with surprise, waiting for the catch. "The only thing I ask," I told them, "is that you love people while you're out. So, wherever you go and whatever else you do, I want you to love people. When you return we'll talk about it and see what God did." With that, I prayed for the group and sent them out in pairs with only one assignment-love.

The group arrived after an hour and as they trickled into the living room they could hardly wait to tell their stories. Most of the accounts began with something like, "Well, we didn't know what to do so we just went wherever we would have gone and asked God to show us who and how to love." The stories were wonderful. One couple went to Taco Bell, an adventure in itself, and paid for the dinner of the person in front of them. They then shared a blessing with that individual. Before leaving they were approached by someone asking about the exchange they had witnessed. It turned out to be a church planter new to the area who was deeply touched by what he had seen. Another couple had a similar experience at Panda Express. As they expressed their desire to buy the meal for the single mother and her children in line in front of them, the mother began to weep. Unable to speak, she leaned into the couple and they held her, blessing her with words of encouragement from Papa's heart. Another couple blessed a lone elderly man with a Starbucks gift card and then enjoyed simple conversation for the next half hour. Another couple tried to wash someone's windows at a gas station. The couple laughed as they shared their story of rejection as the suspicious person quickly denied

them the opportunity to serve him. We all shared in their laughter and celebrated their willingness to step out and love, even if it was not fully received. Something was happening in the group. Through these love stories they were beginning to understand how easy and fun it was to step out and risk together with God.

After we finished exploring our experiences, we opened our Bibles and I taught about spiritual gifts and how they are to be desired. We moved from a teaching about the gifts to a greater understanding of those gifts in the contexts of love. We soon discovered these gifts, as desirable as they might be, are worthless outside of the motivation of love. Therefore, while spiritual gifts should be desired, love must be pursued. Later, in the weekly journals, each person would write about what they had learned from the exploration and the information that night. Here are a few reflections.

Hannah recounted, "It was so fun and so easy and so meaningful to love like this." Willy wrote, "Generosity is a good door opener! Everybody is different in how they think and do things, which is good." Shanae added, "To go out and change the world one person at a time. Let people see how much he loves them." Bob reflected, "Loving people--everyone as the Lord brings, is fun! We need to wildly pursue love and desire gifts. Anything I do not in love is useless. Don't pursue miracles, letter miracles pursue me as I love lavishly." Lou Lou expressed, "To love people and bring joy into their life. Have fun! Anything I do, not in love, is useless. Love!" Mr. Wonderful shared writing,

I love this!!! Generosity was our divine act's factor. It created the open door through which to minister. Finally, in the teaching I learned we are to pursue love and desire spiritual gifts. The idea of pursuing love really intrigued me. In this I discovered that when I pursue a lifestyle of love, Holy Spirit is always there. He lives in the place of love. Whenever I set my heart on love, his presence becomes tangible. What an amazing revelation!!!

David declared, “Celebrate the risk! That we should always be full of love and kindness towards others in all things we do. This is a lifestyle.” Amirah wrote, “Being loving is a lifestyle, we can love people all the time, act in our own gifts and abilities, be intentional.”

The evening concluded with a prayer of impartation over the participants and a challenge to take what they had discovered and implement it in their homes throughout the week. They were then given the week’s journal pages, which allowed them to reflect on the evening, and had daily assignments providing opportunities to experience and express love among their family in their homes. As the group left to go on perhaps the most challenging portion of the adventure, they used words like excited, expectant, grateful, hopeful and determined to describe their hearts.

At the conclusion of the week, participants were encouraged to write in their journals. They were asked to write one or two sentences concerning what God had been teaching them through the week. Their responses were honest and insightful. Hannah referenced Ezekiel 37:11 – 12 and said, “He is bringing back to life dead dreams and dry bones in me.” Willy commented, “Serving my family was okay and helpful, but without love, it was just about duty and a task.” Shanae shared what she had learned saying, “To be attentive slow to anger. Mindful and more grateful for what He’s entrusted to me.” Bob wrote, “He has been showing me that I can be more intentional and expressing love to my family. I have also been struggling in blending who I want to be with who I am.” Lou Lou expressed what she had learned saying, “To be mindful of loving my family the way God loves them.” Mr. Wonderful wrote about this week’s revelation writing, “I need to open my heart to my kids. God desires to reveal himself to them, in part, through me. What a responsibility, and what a joy! Is teaching how to do

this. He is teaching me how to open my heart." Ms. Wonderful shared, "The time is short with my kids and every day I can sow good things into them."

Overall, the week had provided a meaningful foundation. The process of moving from experience to exploration to information to impartation and finally implementation had proven to powerfully position our participants to hear from God. Ultimately, the process moved the participants toward love as a way of life.

### *Week 2 – Honor*

The second week began much like the first and the initial five minutes of our time together consisted of another welcome and sending. This time, each couple was sent out with another couple (more experienced with less experienced) and had the same instruction to go do what they might normally do over the next hour. The only assignment was to honor people they encountered while they were out by listening to the Lord and telling those people how the Lord saw them. Basically, the AD participants were going out on an adventure experience to reveal and speak into the identities of strangers in public places.

After an hour, the group returned and once again gathered in the living room to explore the experiences. It was encouraging to see how people were willing to risk and the many ways in which God honored them as they honored others. One particular story was shared by David, whose only experience of speaking identity into another had been during our retreat, was especially profound. David was with his wife and another couple in a local grocery store when a highly tattooed man approached him, excited to talk about an upcoming boxing match. After engaging in small talk with the man, God decided to

begin to speak directly to this rough character through David. David unveiled the secrets of this man's identity and with each word this tough guy melted until finally he was undone and confessing his need for God and a local church. This story was just one of many in which God showed up and people were radically changed. Once again, the exploration was followed by information and I opened up Scripture and taught about honor. Here are a few of the reflections AD's participants wrote about the night.

David reflected on his powerful experience saying, "Being brave enough to say yes or here I am to the Lord carries with it a great opportunity for adventure and the unexpected. People are so much more than just stereotypes are then the image they show the world." Amirah wrote about her profound revelation saying, "God provides! I have practicing to do in putting myself out there and risking. From the discussion tonight I learned we need to really be active in calling out what we see in people and what God reveals He sees in them. This is especially important with our spouses, who needs to hear these kinds of things from us." Bob spoke about the unassuming yet insightful truth experienced writing, "I appreciate Robbie's teachings. They are simple yet profound. I'm starting to feel I'm embracing the being of who we are rather than the doing—not knowing instead of knowing. This process continues to challenge me."

After the teaching portion of our evening concluded, participants were again prayed over and sent back into their homes to implement a culture of honor. As they were sent out they used words to describe the anticipation of implementation like surprised, purposeful, stretched and afraid. Again, they were given journals for the week, which would provide specific opportunities to honor those closest to them. At the conclusion of

the week the participants recorded what God had been teaching them. Here are a few of their reflections.

Hannah wrote about the beautiful experiences she had in her home and with family saying, “To listen and speak daily to each person in my family. To build, empower, and connect their spirit—so they can be who they were created to be.” Lou Lou was encouraged and commented about the thing she learned saying, “I was reminded of the importance of what we speak out.” Mr. Wonderful also mentioned his family when writing, “He is teaching me that I need to maintain a closeness to my family on a consistent basis.” The process had once again proven powerful as each participant was challenged to go beyond a place of public ministry and connect the things they valued the most directly to those they valued the most.

### *Week 3 – Prophecy*

The third week the group arrived confident they would once again be sent out. The mystery was in knowing what they would be asked to do. Again, the first few minutes consisted of a welcome and sending. Again, couples were paired with couples in order to enhance the experience. The instructions were simple: ask the Lord where He wants you to go and once you arrive, prophecy to people. Again, they were prayed for and sent out. They were given an hour.

The couples returned and gathered in the living rooms to explore their new experiences. This time, the couples sat looking around the room waiting for the first person to share. Once again, stories began to emerge of God’s kindness and the ways lives were impacted on their outing. Still, a new and consistent experience was revealed

in the group's exploration. Many in the group shared they had felt a self-imposed pressure to perform. It seemed they wanted God to shine a bright light on the people they were to talk to and share, in a booming voice, His prophetic declaration over their lives. When that scenario did not exactly take place, many in the group felt insecure and uncertain of how to proceed. Even in that circumstance, the Lord was faithful and spoke encouragement through each participant.

The exploration was followed by information. Bibles were opened and the biblical idea of prophecy was detailed in the context of the experiences they had just shared. The final teaching point addressed the common theme of pressure to perform. We talked about the difference they felt the first night when they only sought to love as opposed to this night when they were expected to prophecy. We were able to grow in our understanding and appreciation that prophecy was an extension of loving. It was a reminder that the power of the prophetic was nothing without love but rather, was released when we sought to love others well. Here are a few of the reflections from our evening of prophecy.

Willy commented in his writing, "Love—serving in generosity are good keys for me to releasing the kingdom. I have seen compassion mercy and grace also work for me. It is nice to witness each of the teams and individuals grow and change." Amirah reflected on what she had received through the course of the evening writing, "Lead with love. You don't need to go into a specific word just asked for God's love for the person and go with that. What does he want to say? What does he see?" Ms. Wonderful began to understand the idea of a prophetic and relational lifestyle saying,

I feel like he is calling us to do this more. I take my kids out every other Wednesday and we prophesy and pray over people wherever the Lord leads. But I

feel like that's good but I can't do this on a day and then turn it off and get in a task zone. I am not a relationship-oriented person. I am more into projects! So for me learning to slow down and make turning my heart and ears to people at all times is a stretch, but something I know I need to do. God wants out of the box I put him in every other week to do.

When the teaching concluded, the group was prayed over and sent into their homes for the week to implement the prophetic. As they were sent they used words like encouraged, joy-filled, peaceful and curious to describe their hearts. They were once again given journals, which would provide an intentionality to developing this prophetic culture. At the conclusion of the week they were asked to write a sentence or two about what the Lord had taught them. Here are a few of their responses.

Hannah wrote, "I was reminded of how simple and fun it is to listen and hear together with our kids. It empowers them in their walk as well as my own. We need to make regular time again for this to happen." Bob's revelation was short but deep saying, "His heart is for my family. He loved them!" Mr. Wonderful reflected, "This week the Lord has been teaching me to celebrate my family. There is much he celebrates about them and he wanted to reveal those treasures to me."

The week once again provided opportunity to implement listening to God and speaking from His voice into our own homes. A continued revelation of His love for the participant's families emerged as He highlighted what an incredible chance they had to give and receive from His heart. Once again, there was a clear movement away from event-information-oriented-experiences and toward a relationship with Jesus, which invaded every aspect of life.

*Week 4 – Healing*

The fourth week brought together an excited and exuberant group. We met on the porch and the participants were postured to receive their sending. Once again, the couples were coupled and sent out. They were asked to listen to the Lord about where He might direct them to go and once they arrived, to find people to pray for with an emphasis on healing. We prayed together and our group was sent out on yet another exciting adventure experience.

The group returned just over an hour later and as we filled the living room, we began to recognize a powerful presence. This night's exploration began with worship and then testimonies of God's greatness began to be effortless expressed. Almost everyone had returned with a story of healing; some physical, some spiritual, some emotional. Our most enthusiastic foursome recounted their experience invading an isolated homeless camp in the foothills. They shared specifics like names, ages, emotions and disabilities. Each participant took a turn telling the accounts of connection, prayer, healing and deliverance. These included a man's back being healed, a woman's hand restored and another delivered from either an emotional disturbance or spiritual bondage. The overall theme of the encounter was love.

The fourth week's movement from exploration to information looked a bit different from the previous three weeks. After a short teaching on several healing accounts in Jesus' ministry, we felt moved to begin the implementation immediately. We did this with one another. Soon, several of AD's participants experienced healing in the loving embrace of those they had grown to love and respect. These healings included a migraine headache obliterated, vertebrae in a neck realigned, and deliverance from

depression. At the conclusion of the night participants reflected on the evening. Here are a few of the reflections.

Ms. Wonderful addressed a place in which she had previously experienced loss saying, “I learned that it is a lie that I am in constant defeat and that I can’t do everything in front of me—the truth is God’s measurement of success is different than my measurement of success.” Amirah shared a profound revelations saying, “Jesus healed with commands. We have victory no matter what. We can carry Jesus’ authority by faith.” David summed up the evening with just three words, “Celebrate the risk!”

The evening on the fifth week was concluded once more with prayer and a sending to implement the things that were discovered in the home. Though people were exhausted emotionally by the night’s experience, they were filled with expectation for the coming week. The group, in describing their hearts toward implementing these things, used words like thankful, inspired, unsure, and exploring. The group was then given journals for the week, which provided suggestions and opportunities to pursue healing in their own homes. At the conclusion of the week, participants wrote about the thing the Lord had taught them during the week. Here are a few revelations they shared.

Bob shared a simple reminder saying, “Trust in the Lord to do what he is able to do.” Mr. Wonderful wrote about his emerging conviction saying, “The Lord is showing me that he really desires to work through my prayers and that I must pray more. The great adventure is a participation in Christ’s life.” Hannah shared an honest reflection about struggles she had endured in this area writing, “I learned that God can do anything, but the past seven years I have had more losses than successes in this area of healing. It has taken a major toll on my confidence to step out and ask for healing on behalf of others.”

These brave and authentic expressions powerfully portray the participant's hearts. Their honesty is a constant reminder of not only their current experience in AD but also, the experiences they carry with them from the past. This observation expresses the complexity of qualitative research as it involves not only a snapshot of a person's current emotion and experience but, represents a broad portrait of the entirety of a person.

### *Week 5 – Love*

As the group gathered for our final adventure, there was a sense of excitement coupled with sadness concerning AD's conclusion. This group of mostly strangers had been knit together as friends and family and the prospect of our time coming to an end was difficult. As had become the expected norm, I welcomed the group and then sent them out with their last experiential assignment. The fifth and final week of AD was a celebratory return to the simplicity of love. This bookend was intended to reinforce the participant's practical application of love as the umbrella over all the other gifts. As the group prepared to depart, I reminded them about all the spiritual resources at their fingertips and that whatever God did through them would firstly be a loving expression of His heart.

The group returned in just over an hour and we gathered in the living room once more. After a brief time of singing, the night's narratives began to be shared and we were once again amazed by God's faithfulness and His willingness to show up when we were willing to risk. Our last evening together was filled with testimonies of the joy expressed in the natural revelation of love. Several of our stories declared the intricacy of His handy work. One of our adventurers prayed for a random man in a hospital only to discover she

knew his wife and had already been praying for him the last several months. Another couple popped in on some friends who had been struggling. Although there was no profound experience to report, the significance of the encounter was a reminder that sometimes the best expression of love is not found in words but simple presence.

After the exploration of our experiences, I shared a final teaching about love, again connecting it to the experiences still fresh on the hearts and minds of the participants. As we closed, we shared in a final impartation and sending. This sending was a final implementation that we hoped would continue to extend itself in the legitimate discovery that discipleship, following Jesus, is a lifestyle. Being like Jesus would always be rooted in being with Jesus. All the things we had done therefore are the radical results of relationship. Disciples live in and from relationships. Relationships are the constant source of the overflow into the disciple's life. In the final week of journaling, participants were asked to share their greatest takeaways from their participation in AD. These statements are not in any particular order and collectively express common themes found in the group's final journal entries. The following are twelve of the statements they wrote in reflection about their experience in Adventure Discipleship.

- 1) Remembering His Presence is the foundation of everything and simplicity of everything.
- 2) This was a phenomenal time for me to reset my heart with the Lord and rediscover personal intimacy.
- 3) How much the Lord loves me right where I am at!
- 4) Live free in Christ and don't be afraid to share Him.

- 5) Love God, love yourself, love others – these represent the sole purpose and the source of releasing the Holy Spirit.
- 6) Growing and feeling the love of God not just for me, but seeing people in a new way.
- 7) Having my heart open, my eyes open, my ears ready to receive and to take those risks.
- 8) To be intentional about what I am sowing into my household.
- 9) You don't have to muster up a mindset to go minister. Do it everywhere you go... Leak what God gave you!
- 10) We can ask things of God like words for someone else and heal with power in Jesus name if we are willing to risk.
- 11) We celebrate the risk and give the result to God.
- 12) When ministry flows from intimacy and our goal is to love the people in front of us.

Vital to the process of AD was its movement from the mountain to the metropolis.

This, as displayed through Jesus' example, was an essential part of the process. As important as the mountaintop experience had been to lay foundations of being with Jesus, there would be a tragic reduction of the gospel if that were where it remained. Discipleship, as lifestyle, must therefore be expressed in every setting and every situation in which we find ourselves. In focus groups, AD's participants reflected on the importance of moving from the mountain to the metro with concise and insightful observations.

David talked about personal/communal transformation and being commissioned saying,

It seems that we experienced great personal growth on a retreat but then there's so much communal growth and life growth and transformation in an entire community when we'd take that outside. So yeah, it's like the disciples being transformed by God and they are no longer fisherman or tax collectors but now they are these chosen and holy people that are commissioned and sent out by God.

Willy reflected on the uniqueness of the process. He saw how it is counter-intuitive for most church attenders. Willy shared,

In the church setting you know, it's usually about going out and bringing them in but in this setting it was like you are the church, you are sons and daughters, go release it wherever you go. That's not easy for a lot of people because it's not taught a lot. I think that kind of activation is always the key to any teaching and so I like the experience first the teaching second.

Matt talked about the experience of being sent out with enthusiasm. He expressed,

Lives were changed from those weeks, you know? Every week there was a testimony of somebody's life that was changed. We could've all changed our own lives, you know? But there's something different when we go out and seek and overcome the nerves and take that risk and be bold enough to see God's message and His healing for somebody else.

Bob talked about the difference in event as opposed to lifestyle saying, "If you don't take that mountain experience and convert it into going out it becomes, 'Remember that one really great weekend we had? Yeah that was really great now back on with life.' This seems to be what gets missed a lot-taking this and making it a part of your life."

Clair reflected on the powerful impact of being sent out and its focus on her family saying, "I think it was so valuable to me to have the real focus of cultivating those things inside of my own home. I have a tendency to look at all the ways that I can reach out to people and what gets left out is my family." Hannah spoke about her experience the value of following Jesus in every aspect of life saying,

I think that's why not just having retreat but having the six weeks is so important. It makes it something very natural and something a part of your life but also impacts your relationship with your husband or your wife and then with your children and then with your community. It like infiltrated a lifestyle not just in a place for a moment. It was really good!

Adventure Discipleship's impact on the individual and upon each couple also greatly impacted their homes. Emphasizing implementation within the household and family unit awakened the participants to the significance of beginning there. Bob expressed this understanding saying, "I think it's the biblical standard...First Jerusalem, then Judea, then the rest of the world. If you don't do it at home then how successful will you be when you take it out of your home and beyond? I think our goal and mission is our kids first." Shanae echoed these sentiments saying, "If you're not living that way and doing it at home, how authentic can you be to someone else?" When addressing the process of implementation in the home Mr. Wonderful remarked, "It made me reassess myself and realize that I have to change some of the ways I interact with the kids so that I can be ready to lead them into the experience with God." Hannah, who is incredibly intentional in the home, expressed her joy in the process of implementation saying, "This was one of the best things. I really loved this because I love doing this with our kids. That's like my comfort! It's just something that's been on my heart for a long time." Though implementation was the final step in the formula, it was the most necessary in moving discipleship away from something we did and into something we are.

Finally, it is important to note here, Adventure Discipleship is not transformative as a process. It engages in practices that Jesus implemented in moving from mountain to metropolis. With that said, the entire system is set up for failure unless Jesus does what

we cannot do without Him. In this regard, AD simply positions participants to encounter Jesus and enjoy the fruit of doing life with Him together.

### **Intimacy, Authority, and Adventure**

#### *Intimacy*

The entire premise of this project was information alone does not produce transformation. Therefore, change comes not from knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him. The first goal of this research was to produce valuable vulnerability in participants through adventure, thus positioning them for greater intimacy with Jesus, which is the foundation of discipleship. Intimacy with Jesus can be gaged by time alone with Him, feeling loved and accepted by Him, a greater ability to hear and discern His voice, and a deeper understanding of identity in Him.

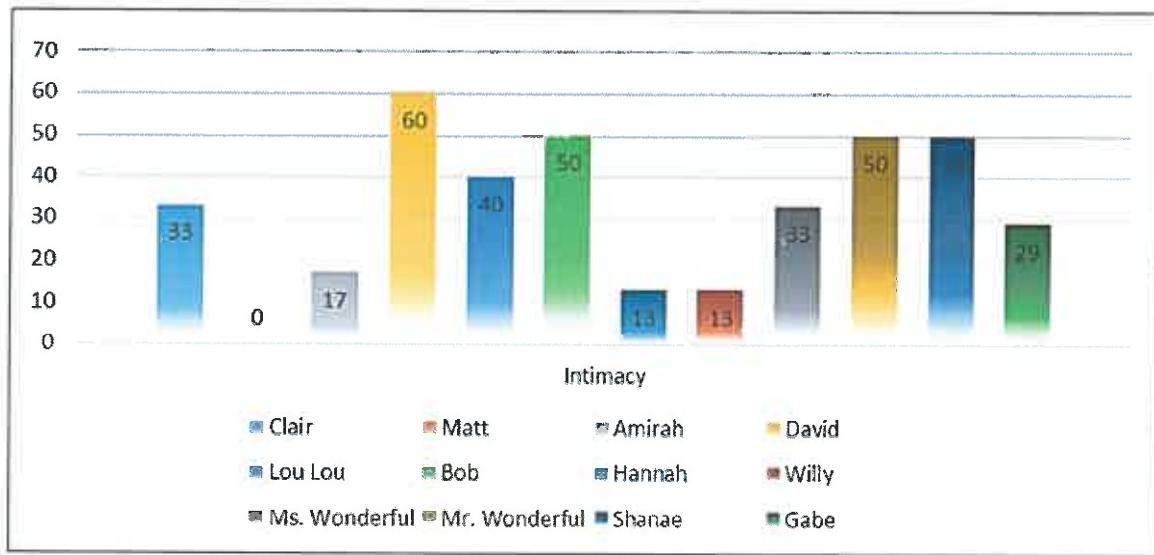


Figure 1. Percentage Increased in Intimacy

The twelve participants, comprised of six couples, had a collective percentage of growth over 30% in the area of intimacy with Jesus. For many of Adventure Discipleship's participants, the process was a real reset in the way it released them to be with Jesus. Clair expressed a kind of clarity and newness in her intimacy with Jesus saying, "I would say for myself, Adventure Discipleship reignited a passion. I think it released me to step into things that I know have been there in my heart for a really long time but that I haven't known how to step beyond."

When asked how AD had affected Bob's closeness with God he replied, "Adventure Discipleship has helped me to embrace an awareness that says that everywhere I go and everything I do, He's there. So that's just a challenge to kind of push myself into intimacy and be like, 'He's right here, right now.' It has been a revelation of love—the tangible love Jesus has for me and each of us."

One of the factors AD's participants had to war against was limitations on time, energy and resources. Overextending themselves to commitments often created barriers between them and the Lord. This robs from the intimacy the Lord and the participant's desire. Willy reflected on the way AD helped him reengage with God despite life's many demands saying, "I think for me, and I've said this before, this season is always really busy for us and so the keyword is intentional. It has helped keep focus to be intentional and find time with Him in a crazy busy time. It has helped me stay focused on him. I've gone back to basic of just being loved and loving him." Lou Lou echoed similar sentiments when she spoke about how AD refocused her on the most important things in life saying, "AD has made me do better in evaluating my priorities and it's helped with my perspective on where things are and where God is in those things. It has really gone

far in allowing us to focus back on what is most important and bringing our family back to that place. It's helped me refocus on being closer with Jesus."

Hannah hit the heart of intimacy with Jesus as she reflected on a necessary reengagement with Him. Though it felt risky, it reawakened something in her releasing her to be still and listen for His voice. Hannah has been a Christian longer than anyone else in the group. She spoke about the effect AD had on her connection with Jesus.

I needed Adventure Discipleship in this season just to remember and to have the occasions made for me to go to be outside, to take physical risks and just do things physically. I also needed to be in a group with like-minded people because I think I realized I shut a lot of that down because I haven't had it. I haven't shut my relationship with the Lord down, but to be with people that are on the same page and that are hungry and listening . . . it reawakened something and some things that I don't think I really realized I have been missing with Him. I needed a reset in some areas of my walk. Indeed, to remember the simple things—being still, listening, and to remember my goal was love and intimacy and not everything I'm doing.

For several of our participants, expressing newfound places of intimacy was done through the lens of His faithfulness to them as they risked ministering to those around them. They discovered how to be with Jesus while He was doing something through them. Ms. Wonderful expressed a greater sense intimacy with Jesus as her trust in Him grew saying,

I think Adventure Discipleship taught me that celebrating the risk was a huge thing for me. You kept going over that with us, over and over again, and I think it's just like, the whole honesty with God and trusting Him on the adventure and that He wasn't going to let us down when we went out in public. He would always be there which deepened my trust level with Him a lot. I learned that I don't have to feel or work to minister but just to go leak what I carry from God.

Amirah echoed Ms. Wonderful's sentiments about intimacy and Jesus' willingness to show up saying,

There have been so many ways AD has brought me closer to Jesus. The kind of practical things that we did each Monday going out to ask for a word for someone.

Like that kind of thing isn't something that I've done. It's something that I've been kind of aware of and that I've done maybe sometime in the past, but it's not something that I consciously do on a regular basis. So those experiences and seeing Him show up for that, like what we were talking about, it was a good reminder for me that that door is open. If I am actually going to be intentional and listen for Him each day that He will show up and be a lot closer in more real ways than I allow Him to be. This experience has shown me I am enough as I am, and he wants closeness with me now, not just when I get everything together and am feeling more spiritual.

Although Matt did not show any statistical improvement in terms of intimacy with Jesus, He expressed an important observation about an avenue he feels brings him closer to God.

Adventure Discipleship has helped me see that I feel closer to Him when I'm asking Him about someone else than about myself. Does that make sense? So I'm liking that being intentional and like, seeking the Lord for my household and my kids. It's the time spent and I feel like it's also some sort of that outward perspective where I feel like I'm more open to intimacy with Him because I'm seeking help for somebody else.

Perhaps the most powerful and emotional examples of intimacy were expressed by those whom actually showed the greatest statistical increase in this particular area. The depth of revelation each of them exhibited was important and profound. Mr. Wonderful articulated an important aspect of intimacy, which had grown far beyond the walls of the church, and a performance based relationship saying,

In Adventure Discipleship I've set aside time for Him in the right place. Maybe the context has been church or Sunday morning or when the music is just right and we start prophesying or whatever, but this took it out to where I find myself standing in line at Walmart and going to pull out my phone and then suddenly realize, you know, there's people around here I don't need to go to social media, I need to show God's love right here! I'm more aware in that place of God's presence and I feel Him. So the intimacy level and the times of intimacy increased and I look for it much more than whereas before I might be standing in Walmart on a Monday and be thinking that Wednesday nights going to be a great time for prophecy and I can't wait until I get prophecy and not even think God's right here and wants to do stuff now. I feel much closer to Jesus after learning that He simply wants me to minister from who I am. I don't have to be anyone else. Jesus is happy with me.

Shanae talked about her simple and insightful revelation of intimacy as well.

When she spoke about the impact AD had on her relationship with God tears filled her eyes as she shared, "It has helped me so much! I've noticed that I've decided it is okay to let Him love me the way that He does. I just want Him with me all the time. It's just so beautiful, you know? I can't imagine ever living without Him. I definitely feel Him with me more."

Perhaps the greatest expressed breakthrough in terms of going deeper with God came from David. His exuberant expression of freshly found intimacy was exciting to hear in the sound of his voice and see in the joy on his face.

Personally, I have experienced God in a trillion different ways in Adventure Discipleship and all of those different things are facets of the Lord and these are different ways of experiencing Him and that has opened my eyes to different ways of spending time with Him and how I spend time with Him. It's done a lot for intimacy together because you know, I'm the person that's just starting to see the edges of the box and see that there something beyond that and feel around the edges and go outside and to see that there's things outside and so many different things in ways that the Lord is working and I just haven't opened my eyes to them yet. It's really given me an excitement to spend more time alone with the Lord and to be excited going places with Him throughout the day and everything else, I'm just excited about a greater intimacy with the Lord. Spending time with Jesus is fun and exciting and we are growing closer.

### *Authority*

For the purposes of this research, authority was described as the ability to do what Jesus did. Authority was measured through certain pursuits such as sharing the love of God with those around them, hearing from the Lord and sharing it with others, receiving words, dreams or visions for someone else, praying for healing and seeing positive results, and having a greater understanding of personal authority in the spiritual realm. Authority, like intimacy, is a vital component to Christ-likeness. Jesus does not demand we become

like Him and then withhold the ability to do so. Just like Jesus sent the twelve to preach and with authority to cast out demons, He gives us the same opportunity to co-labor with Him in this shared authority.

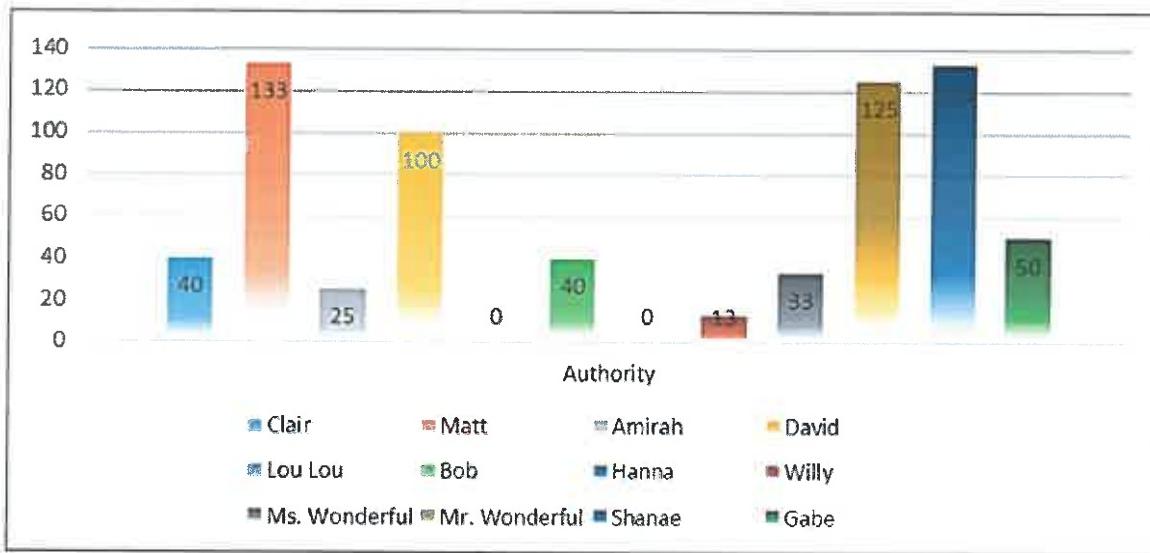


Figure 2. Percent Increased in Authority

The greatest statistical increase in the study came in connection with participants understanding and exorcising authority. With a rise of more than 45%, participants showed a dramatic increase in this area.

Throughout Adventure Discipleship, it became increasingly clear that a participant's discovery of authority was directly connected to their willingness to risk. Risk is an aspect of adventure. It produces vulnerability and makes people dependent on someone or something beyond themselves. One of the things we consistently championed in the group was a celebration of risk. Often times we are unwilling to risk because what we consider success or failure is tied to the result. In this case, risk was celebrated as an opportunity to partner with God in things we could never do without Him. In that regard, we were successful the moment we risked and what God did through us was experienced

and appreciated in the space we afforded Him to work through us. Matt, who stepped out and grew in this place more than anyone expressed similar sentiments saying, “We feel kind of inadequate right? You know, it didn’t take long for me to see that I wasn’t capable of doing this stuff on my own. I think that’s where the risk comes in and things and people get changed.”

Willy also spoke about authority and the necessity of risk to give God space to do things through you. “It’s been a good reminder of his authority. I don’t think there’s any time that that I’ve done anything that’s taking a risk that he hasn’t shown up—either I felt his presence, heard his voice or saw what he wanted to do and it always draws me closer.”

Amirah, who had no previous participation or theological foundation in exercising authority, reflected on her new realization saying, “I’ve realized all believers can walk with authority because Christ’s victory is already won. You’re just putting yourself in a position where you’re risking doing something where if he doesn’t come through then there’s no way that you’re pulling it off. Without the risky you never see Him come through in and there’s no growth.”

David, who had also never experienced this kind of authority, rightly recognized its source and the privilege of partnering with Jesus in this way.

When we are in this same old rodeo we have a tendency to try to do it on our own. But, when we are thoroughly relying on God and are now partnering with Him we are experiencing Him in a different way. I now see that I have been imparted with power to bless people though the authority I realize I have.

Shanae, another participant with no previous experience with authority, spoke about her willingness to risk and allow God to work through her. After making great progress in understanding and expressing authority—as much statistical growth as anyone—she summed up her experience saying,

I think, at least for me, that part of the risk is making myself vulnerable to Him and a lot of the adventure is when I open my heart and my mind and I'm willing to let Him work through me. It becomes not a risk when I'm open but it's more of an adventure. So, I'm still uncomfortable with it, but I'm more open.

Bob also expressed the centrality of risk and vulnerability making us available to a real confidence in what we carry saying, "You can't risk without vulnerability. If you're talking about physical risk, it's like there's a vulnerability to your body, mind or spirit and so there has to be that exposure and opening up yourself. He gets to work through whatever it is that you are risking. In that, I know my authority in Christ."

Clair became more convinced of her authority as she experienced it in her own personal life as well as through the consistent testimonies of the group. Clair, who consistently pushed passed her nerves, grew in her authority by embracing moving outside of her comfort zone.

There were a lot of things that you've asked us to do that I'm like, 'Oh my, that's out of my comfort zone!' But I was excited for it and nervous, and yeah, to see God show up in the way that he did so many times and in so many different ways in each one of us was really cool.

Hannah, who showed no statistical growth in this area (largely because she had little room to improve), spoke about her experience in AD and the way it positioned the group to see what the Lord would do through them.

I would say like when you take a risk that it puts you in a vulnerable place that you're going to depend on something. This experience put you in a place of being dependent on the Lord. You helped me remember the simplicity of listening, loving, and moving with Jesus."

Time and time again, AD participants expressed a deeper recognition of authority through their willingness to risk. Mr. Wonderful, who had our third highest statistical development in this area, was especially willing to put himself out there and attempt to do the impossible. Mr. Wonderful expressed this process saying,

I have grown a lot in this area. Robbie showed me that I simply need to take faith-filled risks, and let God do the rest. I think of Peter getting out of the boat. You know, there was an encounter waiting for Him but there was a process of stepping out. I think the different adventures that we went on through the weeks was part of this course. There was a stepping out. That's the thing that started out the encounter. It was a stepping out that changed that factor.

Gabe, one of our more outrageous participants who, though displaying only moderate statistical improvement, progressed in leaps and bounds in the area of risk, vulnerability and exercising authority through love, talked enthusiastically about his experience in AD by saying,

So you've got to take those risks. I've been, by myself, taking a lot of risks. I've just been talking to people I wouldn't talk to, like in the elevator or wherever I am, but just lately I'll talk to them. I'll talk to them about Jesus and about God and about how great He is and how wonderful He is and how great He is in their life. It was God who let me join this and let me meet all of you and partake in this and learn with all of you. That just blows me away! I'm excited about the risks we take. We trust you Jesus!

### *Adventure*

The final statistically quantifiable area of the research was adventure. Adventure is about perspective in relationship to the Christian life as well as doing the things Jesus did with greater measure. That being partnership and trust in the Holy Spirit. It builds on intimacy (being with Jesus) and authority (the ability to do what Jesus did) and extends itself to a lifestyle marked by adventurous relationship with God. It is consistently attempting to do the impossible. It frequently shares the gospel and prays for others. All this while taking increasingly more risks, which depend upon the goodness of God as an expression of His glory. Adventure then, by this definition, is the culmination of the project in that it necessitates a lifestyle rather than idealizing isolated events.

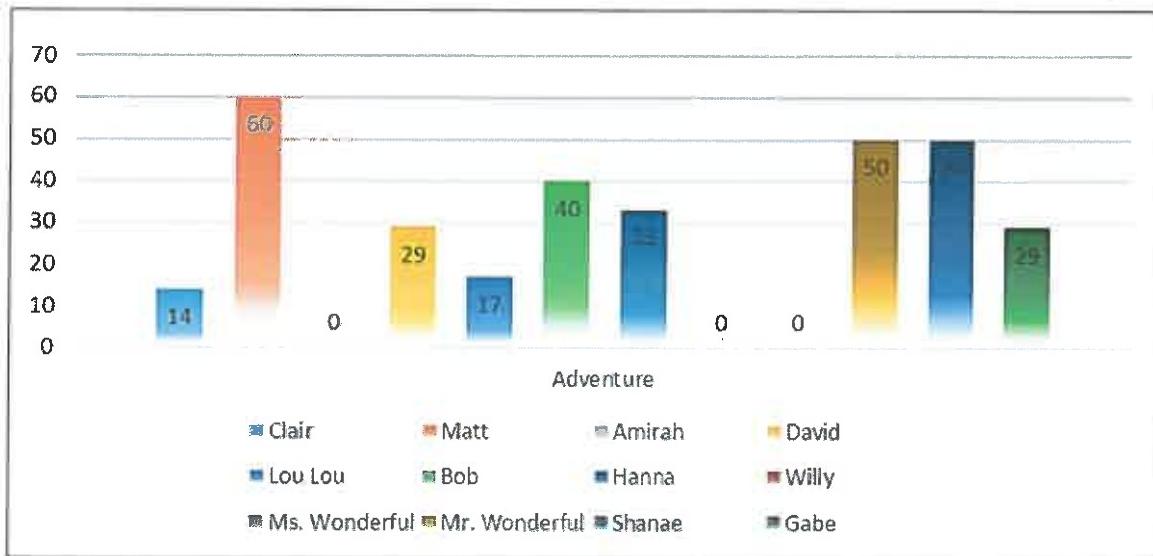


Figure 3. Percent Increased in Adventure

Participants, as a collective group, showed an increase of just over 25% in the category of adventure. Although this was the smallest increase of the three categories, it was clearly a place of new perspective and passion for the participants. Willy, who showed no statistical gain in this area (again, because there was little to no room for growth), has been on adventure with the Lord for almost forty years. These adventures have led him all over the world and into some of the darkest places on the planet. He is well acquainted with living adventurously as a natural expression of the Christian life. Willy remarks about his experience in AD and living the adventure saying,

Well, an adventure is about risk and just about everything in the Kingdom is about taking a risk because it's about faith. So, if you don't take the risk then you are not moving in the faith aspect of Christianity. That's the adventure part. It can be the scary part because adventure is scary but it's that taking that risk that says inside of me that there's faith to believe in something that is bigger than I can actually see. This has been much needed for me!

Lou Lou, another avid adventurer, talked about adventure as a journey saying, "Adventure Discipleship has given me a deeper awareness of all the opportunities every

day to risk and go on adventure with him ... and every journey is a risk. Adventure is stepping out and saying, "God just use me" and trusting whatever that journey is and that God will help you through the obstacles."

Amirah, a leader of outdoor adventures including advanced hiking, backpacking and rock climbing expeditions, shared a particularly interesting perspective on the need to embrace the adventure regardless of the immediate circumstance as well as the lifestyle of adventure she's learned as a result of her participation in AD.

I believe that adventures are, even if everything goes wrong at the end, still good. It's a good story, it's a good experience but that doesn't mean that things are not going to go wrong. It doesn't mean that you're going to be safe the whole time or comfortable. I have learned that He will lead me in mini-adventures every day if I let him and stay open to him speaking and instructing throughout the day.

Ms. Wonderful also embraced the stretching aspect of adventure but also the fun and freedom found in the partnership enjoyed with Jesus.

When I think of adventure I think of something challenging and fun and lighthearted and something that stretches you but doesn't break you. I think that's exactly what we are called to do in life and with our relationship with Christ. This part was awesome. It's not rules and regulations to follow, it's a personal relationship the causes us to explore, stretch and grow!

This stretching and growing often results in new insight, awareness and expectation. AD challenged the box for the next two participants who spoke about their new outlook and excitement about the unexpected. David shared,

We have a tendency to put God in a box and that often puts us in a position where we wouldn't be willing to expect a lot of the ways that God works. I've learned that if we're not ready and willing to expect the unexpected we miss out on the opportunities He has for us.

Clair continued with similar thoughts saying,

We tend to kind of compartmentalize and put ourselves in that box. What I've learned is that when it's an adventure you're willing to reach beyond and step outside of the box of the comfort zone so God is always at work and always doing

things. I think that if you can trust that God is good, even if you are secretly hoping that you don't find adventure, then you know that you can walk through anything and that He is good.

Hannah picked up where David and Clair left off and deepened the conversation about the adventure of the unknown. Hannah embraces the mystery of life in the Spirit and the joy of the journey with Jesus, which is marked with intentional attentiveness.

I think that it's an adventure because every day is different. There's no set path and it's all dependent on us hearing and listening to the Lord and so it all looks different. When you cross over and you get in the river with the Holy Spirit everything just kind of moves and flows a certain way. This time has given me a glimpse... A reminder... Of how the Lord created me to embrace life every day. I feel like some layers of doing have come off but I am still on a journey towards being, listening, and moving in adventure with Jesus.

This listening and moving in relationship with Jesus produces a kind of reliance, which is an essential element of a life defined by adventure. Bob talked about the distinctive way AD has provided purpose on the journey.

The purpose of adventure is being able to rely on Him and not relying on the shortcuts. The adventure isn't a plan, its life. The adventure is day to day and it keeps us aware of His plans/purpose which equal love so that we can be the tangible expression of His love to others."

Gabe talked in detail about the ebb and flow life in the Spirit and how dependence on God is the hallmark of adventure. Gabe, in the way Gabe does, expressed the beauty of knowing Jesus is always with him, which he came to enjoy through AD.

Since I've started knowing the Lord and learning about adventure here, I know that He's with me. If something stands in my way or blocks my path and He will move it and I know the only way to get through it is with the Lord. The Lord will move it out of my way. If he doesn't move it out of my way he'll show me how to go around it or how to fix it. He'll take me over obstacles that I could never ever do by myself. I would usually be fearful of that or nervous about doing something like that and I would stay away from it. But the Lord is an adventure every day.

The final three are those that showed the greatest measure of growth concerning living the adventure and daring to live daringly. These three exhibited tenacity in their

willingness to risk and go after new things in new places with new people. These three were overwhelmingly willing to listen for His voice and jump immediately into whatever Jesus asked. Matt expressed the correlation that his willingness to risk was equal to the measure in which he entrusted himself to the goodness of God.

As people become Christians later in life they can feel like the adventure was the first part of their life when they were wild and crazy. They think being a Christian means it's time to kind of button up and be safe. So that's just why I love this experience so much because it has put a name to what I feel. Yeah, so I love this because it's given that sense of like, it's not comfortable always, and it's not always safe, but it's good. It's good.

Shanae talked about her delight to dare if it was something God was leading. "I think an important piece of this is trying to put expectations aside because we're willing to take anything that God has for us. There is wonder in it all. What a great adventure!" Finally, Mr. Wonderful talked about his experience in AD and the dramatic shift in his perspective. Mr. Wonderful, through the course of AD, came to realize adventure was more about fun than fear and relationship than rules. In his own words he expressed,

This is the area I have grown most. I think what I learned out here through this process has been that this is how God designed it to be and he designed it to be fun! God designed it to be to be something where perspective is not one of fear or that I have to do this or I need to follow these rules. He is inviting me into a relationship that is going to be fun and we need to step out and go for it. I'm going to grow through this process and it's going to be an adventure. It takes so much anxiety off knowing Jesus wants to take me on an adventure, which is so much different than thinking he simply wants me to perform my Christian duty.

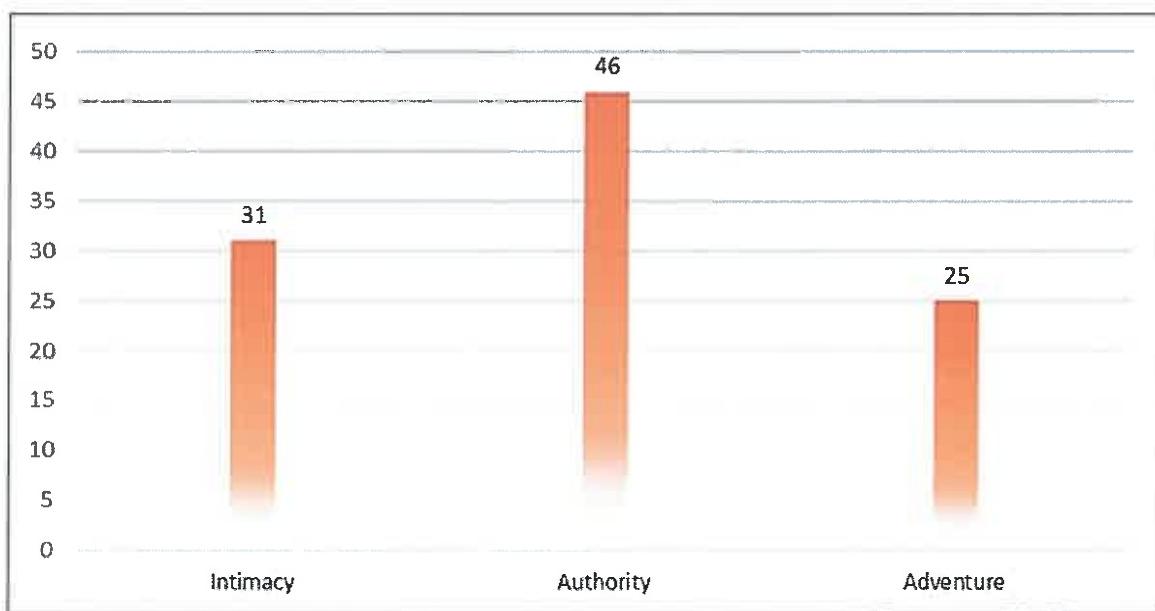


Figure 4. Combined Percentages of Increase

As represented on the chart above, each of the three categories of intimacy, authority and adventure displayed accumulative increases when evaluating the twelve participants as a whole. These statistical data therefore, support the obvious narrative describing the growth of the participants in each of these measurable areas. With this said, what is not represented by the numbers is the researchers observation that in several categories, including many specific questions, participants gave themselves no room for growth due to high scores on the pre-surveys. This is represented by the chart below, which details not only the actual percent of growth but also the potential maximum change and the percent of maximum change.

**Table 6.1. Percent Improvements for All Clients and All Attributes**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b># of Attributes Measured</b>	<b>Pre-Test</b>	<b>Post-Test</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>Max Potential Change</b>	<b>Percent of Maximum Change</b>
Intimacy	12	75	98	23	30.7%	60.0%	51.1%
Authority	12	61	89	28	45.9%	96.7%	47.5%
Adventure	12	77	96	19	24.7%	55.8%	44.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>32.9%</b>	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>47.6%</b>

The final statistical observation made by this researcher was in many cases pertains to the way participants perceived themselves in their pre and post-surveys. The participants graded themselves highly in the pre-survey and then, during the course of AD, developed a more accurate picture of how they truly function in an area that either lowered their score or kept it from rising more substantially. Statistical anomalies played a substantial role in the numerical data collected due to participant perception.

These scores represent statistically measurable data. Yet, the most meaningful indicators of transformation were articulated in the participants through stories. These testimonies created a compelling over-arching story that authenticated the power of Adventure Discipleship as it positions participants to encounter Jesus. Many of these accounts and observations will be detailed in the final phase of this chapter.

### Insights and Observations

The predominant purpose of AD was to position participants for encounter. It made room for Jesus to become the primary instructor and teacher. I was simply a facilitator of experience and nurturer of what Jesus was producing among the group.

One of the greatest benefits to this approach was in the diversity of what each participant learned through the course of the project. This observation led to a radical conclusion: when people are positioned to listen to God and not simply a sermon, they get exactly what they need because God meets them exactly where they are. This process guards against information regurgitation and creates space for Jesus to speak.

This observation was initially made when data was collected through journal entries at the conclusion of the opening retreat. The statement in the journal read, “This weekend God revealed to me.” The following are brief examples of the kinds of diversity discovered as revelations were declared. These answers included: He is my protector and provider; I need more fun in my life; I am free; it’s okay not to know; His love on a deeper level; the peace that I feel when I rest in His presence; He really wants to spend time with me just because He loves me; to have my identity in Him and be satisfied in Him alone; and He removed barriers to me living in my full identity. The variety of these statements, though initially startling, were soon revealed as strengths rather than weaknesses and supported the hypothesis of this project rather than detracting from it. This was in incredibly important understanding and the differences revealed by each participant became a point of celebration rather than contradiction.

Another place of variation, which was consistent with the above observation, was when participants were asked, in their journals, “In what area has there been more

personal revelation as a result of your participation?" The group was given three answers from which to choose: identity, calling, or mission. The twelve participants responded and were spread evenly across the three choices. This observation was an articulation of diversity in what the group received and in what, to the group, was most meaningfully revealed.

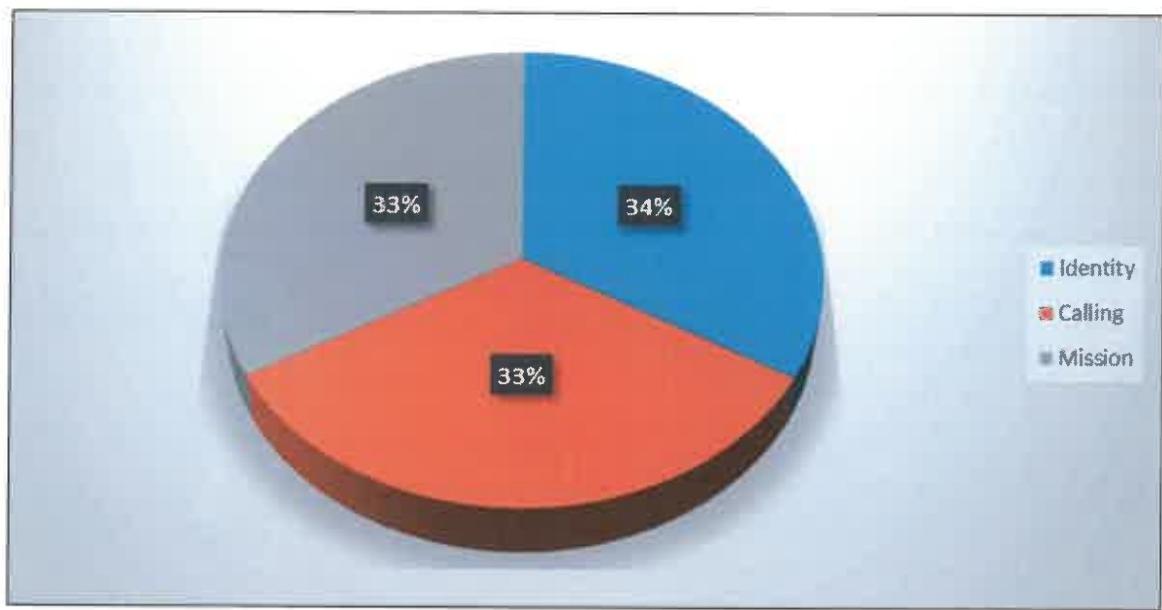


Figure 5. Area of Most Insight

With this point prominently noted, there were also some surprising consistencies reported among the group. One of the concluding questions in the journals asked participants, "In which area did you experience greatest increase as a result of your participation?" The group was given three answers from which to choose: power, love, or purpose. The group responded with an overwhelming majority saying the greatest place of increase was in the category of love.

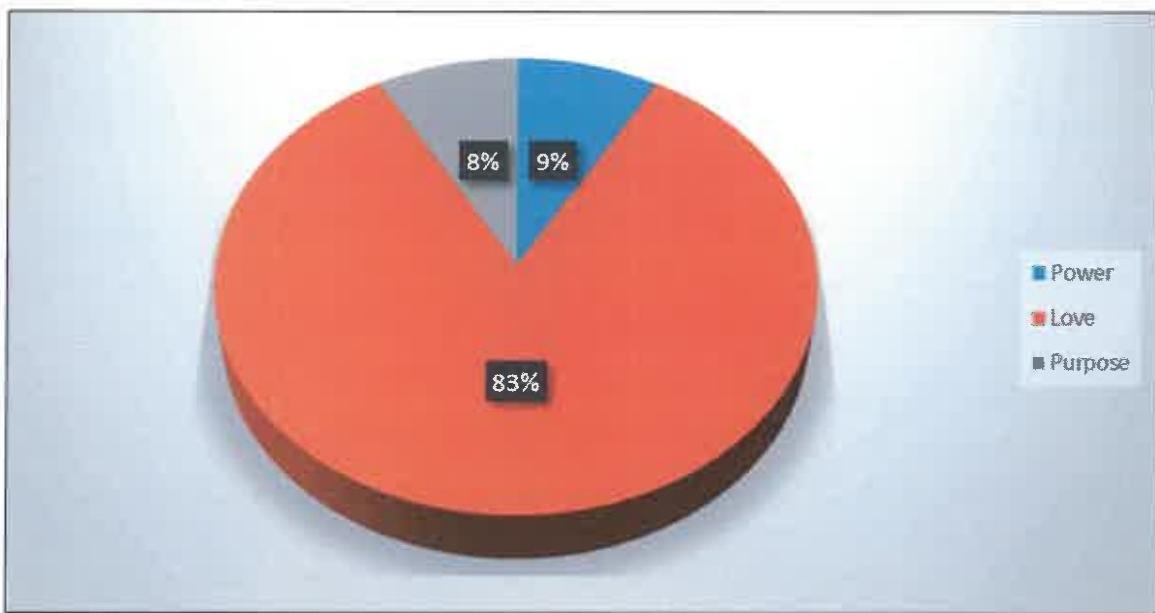


Figure 6. Area of Greatest Increase

Another surprising place of consistently occurred when the group was asked, “What area has been most impacted by your participation in adventure discipleship?” Again, three choices were given which included: personal, marriage or family. Although each of these three areas was emphasized throughout the process, the vast majority of the group agreed they had been impacted most profoundly in a personal way.

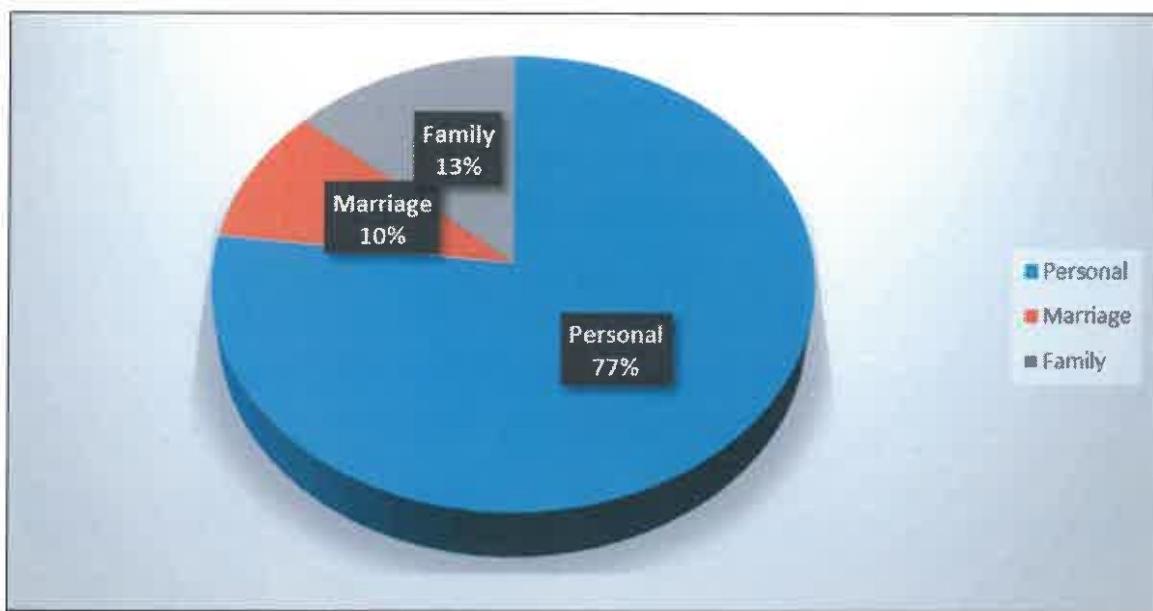


Figure 7. Area of Most Impact

Another important area of reflection was in the unique formula followed in AD. As mentioned several times throughout the research, participants consistently moved from experience to exploration and then to information. This is a significant variance from traditional western models of discipleship, which generally begin with a heavy dose of information and gives little thought to what might come next. This process was the heart of AD because it consistently positioned participants to encounter the Lord, to reflect on those encounters as a group and then to gain insights into those encounters through a deep biblical teaching. Interestingly enough, this process was never highlighted or discussed until the focus group interviews several weeks after AD's conclusion. During each of the three focus groups, participants were asked to reflect on the process, which was, for the first time, shared with them in that way. Their responses and reflections were both convicting and compelling. It seemed that in addition to an

awareness of their own transformation, the AD participants were attentive toward the process, which had positioned them for change.

Amirah and Willy both made meaningful observations about the practical importance of the process and compared it to the alternative models chosen by most churches. Amirah began,

If you go to a church service, to a camp or to a retreat and you might hear the best teaching and get a lot of awesome information. You will think how great it is and that you should implement it and then you leave and you don't. So, doing it first and then cementing the experience by putting words to it made a huge difference in realizing that it is practical and it is something that you can do. I feel like the few times that doing something like this is brought up in church, the general reaction is that that's really cool but that I could never do that and so no one tries. But forcing us to try it and then having the teaching connected to it to what we just did made the biggest difference in making it practical.

Willy continued where Amirah left off and highlighted the significant difference in this approach as opposed to most mainstream congregational methods. Willy articulated,

Most people want the teaching first, which is typically how the church does it. For me this wasn't as hard, it was more like a breath of fresh air. Thank you for not preaching and teaching for an hour and never giving us an opportunity to just go love someone. You were like, "Go hear from God and go give them something and then come back," and I was like, "Yeah!" It's like we got to go to the candy store you know? We all got to go play in the game because you made it simple. You didn't say, "I want you to go get a word of knowledge and then I want you to go find a specific person." You didn't make it hard, you just said, "Go love somebody." I think when you started it that way it was like, "I can do that." It was so fresh. It's fresh and it's challenging because, usually you want the teaching to go first to back up what you're trying to get them to do. That way when they go and do it they'll do it right and there's not a mess. But I think you had a good group to really go like, "Hey! Go get them!"

Several of the participants spoke about the ways they were impacted by the process. Clair and Ms. Wonderful both mentioned the benefit of the variety of unique

experiences, which gave space for the Lord to customize the message for each specific person. Clair talked about this saying,

Well, you know, I think each night we'd arrive and our only instruction was, "Okay tonight we are going to go out and show someone love," and in your mind your like, "Okay, what does that look like? What is that?" So then you take some time, try to listen to the Lord, you go out and then come back and every single person has had different experience. Even if someone had the same experience they're seeing it from a different place. Then you give us this teaching and we're all applying it in our own way and so each person is getting something a little bit different but it's all the same. I thought it was brilliant that you orchestrated it like that. I thought it was perfect!

Ms. Wonderful shared similar sentiments saying,

Going out and doing that kind of stuff just helps a lot more stick. I feel like it helped me grow a lot more than I would have if it had just been teachings. It also personalized it too because we all got something different that the Lord wanted to show us. In the teaching, even though we all definitely got the same information, the Lord tailored to our circumstances.

Other participants related the advantages of the process to their particular styles of learning. David and Hannah each commented on the advantages of the teaching coming after the experience rather than preceding it. David began by saying,

The teaching to me was more impactful after having the experience because I had a reference point but also I had completely bought in. I didn't have to go, "No, I disagree" and there was nothing for me to challenge or to think "I don't know about that." It gave me something to stand on in regard to the teachings because we experienced it and it made me fully want to understand what happened. The teaching was already pertinent to what I'd already done. I just want to do it repeat, do it repeat, and nurture that experience and the teaching that came from it.

Hannah also addressed the benefits of this type of learning process saying,

The way I typically learn is very hands on and as I'm experiencing it, things start to make much more sense. So, to have the experience first kind of brings it all together for me. It really helped then to come in, sit down, process it and get even more perspective by hearing what other people are saying. Having the teaching after all that works so much better for my mind and for absorbing the information. I also appreciate that it was a lot more apostolic. It's more of an apostolic way of doing things because it's not this top down way but rather its' like, "I'm here to serve and we're all in this together." It was empowering and it safe.

The counter-intuitive nature of AD in the framework of tradition western Christian constructs was not always easy to reconcile. In fact, Bob pointed out that this type of education process would never succeed in traditional learning contexts. Bob understood the only way this formula worked was if God was in it. Bob reflected,

This is God's economy. This is the way God does things. This is not how I learned in school. I mean, you can't just slam down a calculus problem in front of me and say, "Do the calculus problem and then I'll tell you how you did it." You can't ever do that in man's world. But in God's world that is how it is. That's how He works. Just a little exclamation point that says, "Yeah, this is how I roll!" God is just kicking it.

Perhaps the greatest impact of this counter cultural model was expressed by Mr. Wonderful. Mr. Wonderful had only recently emerged from seminary where he had been deeply immersed in information. As a result, he had come into AD with a more traditional expectation of what he would get and how he would get it. In the following reflection, Mr. Wonderful talks frankly about his initial struggle with the process, the necessary undoing of his expectations and eventually, his great appreciation for Adventure Discipleship and its movement from experience to exploration and finally, information. Mr. Wonderful began by saying,

I think it helped things stick because the teaching supplemented are our experience instead of the teacher giving us preconceived ideas about what the experience should be. But that's not what I was expecting. I was coming fresh out of the Christian educational system and was like, "Okay, he's working on his doctorate degree and I'm ready to learn. I have a notebook and am ready to take notes. I was thinking, "There's gonna be 100 pages of notes this weekend!" It was really strange to go from that expectation to wait, we're not doing that? You're going to give me tidbits at the end instead? It really made me focus a lot more on the experience. So then, God became the instructor and you were supplementing the things that He was doing in us.

It was really hard for me. Actually, very hard. I kept looking for the information and thinking like, "I can build off the information. I just spent five years building off of information and now you're saying no information? Like what do you want

me to do? Make it up? But then, as I started getting the rhythm of it, I was like, “Oh, I’m being asked to go deep in relationship and walk it and then allow you to supplement it.” I was coming out of school where we have all the Doctors walking around and, I’m not saying it’s a bad thing but, there’s titles and respect levels and everything. But you reversed all that and you brought yourself into it and made yourself real like, “We’re all doing this together.”

You’re changing the education process. For some people that might be hard to deal with the education process and the authority structure. I came out here with a lot of preconceived ideas in terms of what I expected on an educational level you know like, you were going to give us a bunch of information and I was going to go process everything. Then I get out here and it’s like, let’s play with the volleyball and go jump in the river and listen to God and I’m like, “Wait a second, aren’t you going to recommend a textbook or something?” No other teacher would say like, “Let’s go do a project and then I’ll tell you any instructions afterwards because it’s always about having a standard we need to meet and I’ll give you that standard, period. But to step out in faith and go, now I’m going to give you a project to do and I’ll supplement it afterwards . . . that really stood out to me because I’ve grown frustrated since getting out of school. It’s like I’m teaching and teaching and teaching and teaching and then people are having experiences totally different than what I just taught.

But the whole experience here was actually really surprising and very cool. You got on the same level with all of us and said, “We’re all going to go on an adventure and then we’re going to discuss stuff and then I’m going to supplement what God did.” That was a totally different way of going about the process. I remember more from that than my other classes. I think this will probably end up being considered a more excellent way as time goes on because it changes people. I mean, anything that gives you a clear clean slate to have an encounter with God is always going to be better than giving you preconceived ideas and then try to make you put your experience in a box. Adventure Discipleship just makes sense once you experience it.

It was affirming to hear participants were impacted by their participation in AD. It was also encouraging to hear participants understood why and how they were impacted. Again, there is no infallible formula or perfect process, the key is being intentional about position. Everything that was done during AD was intended to create an opportunity for intimacy with Jesus. Even the things the groups were doing were actually more about who they were being and with whom they were being.

One surprising feature, from the design, implementation and facilitation, was the delight I experienced in continuing to position the group to encounter Jesus. There was a consistent choice to provide opportunities and environments for participants to be attentive to His voice and to respond to what He was saying. Of course, giving up control of the results in this way comes with some risk; however, in developing a model of discipleship that thrived on risk, it would have been disingenuous of me to play it safe. Therefore, I cannot take credit for any of the positive results articulated above. The participants in AD all experienced some measure of change because they encountered the One who makes all things new.

### **Wild Revelations**

An important aspect of AD was to reclaim the word “wild” for the Christian. As mentioned above, this word has been equated to a rebellious posture toward the Lord rather than embracing it as a word describing radical obedience. Not only is this word a description of the nature of God but also the kind of life Christians and the church should embrace. It is a life marked by the celebration of risk, vulnerability and trust. It is a life marked by the embrace of the untamed adventure available to us all.

When asked how AD had revealed the wild available to today’s disciple participants responded with insight. Willy expressed his understanding of wild saying, “God’s not in a box. I mean that’s just who He is. He’s wild and crazy and passionate and full of love. Adventure Discipleship is a wild and crazy act of love.” Clair echoed a similar sentiment saying, “The church gets so caught up with rules or how this is supposed to be. When I think about wild or untamed I just think about not being stuck to

the set of rigid rules but free to be outside the box.” David spoke about the wildness of God and his delight in a new found freedom saying, “God in people is wild. Look at the Bible, those are untamable wild stories! I think we are more like God being wild and untamed ourselves. It’s for freedom we are set free and we are free to be wild at heart, dream big, and be adventurous.” These articulations exhibit the truth about discipleship’s need to break out of the safe and secluded walls of the church and explore the untamed wild of being like Jesus in every context and circumstance. Adventure Discipleship facilitated this expression through risky experiences depending on the Wild One to be with us, in us, and act powerfully through us.

### **Project Conclusions**

Adventure Discipleship proved to be a transformative process. The triangulated data, both statistically and narratively, told a compelling story of twelve participants whose lives were changed. As suggested by the initial hypothesis, participants grew in each of the categories of intimacy, authority and adventure through an experiential understanding of their identity, calling and mission. The measurement of growth was not in intellectual understandings but actual tangible fruit. This fruit resulted from their personal experiences, testimonies from other participants, relevant biblical teaching, spiritual awakening through impartation and meaningful implementation toward developing lifestyles. The individuals also developed a greater practical understanding of their identity, calling and mission as they listened to and heard from the Lord in each of these areas.

The group developed a heightened awareness of God's power, love, and presence through their willingness to risk and trust Him with the result. The group also developed a culture of comradery. The levels of trust, interdependence and appreciation within the group developed naturally. The sense of intimacy in the group created a safe environment to do things that, at times, did not feel safe. This was further fostered through a real atmosphere of celebration, freedom, and fun. These consistent features shaped perspective and invited expectation among participants.

One consistent feature that continually waged war against the success of the project and the transformation of the participants was busyness. The intensity of schedules seemed to stand in the way of intentionality. Although this was exposed through the process, it appeared difficult for participants to find ways to simplify lives already spread so thin. Although AD provided a scaffolding for intentionality through the course of the project, some things having been gained will likely be lost as time goes on. The only safeguard in this process remains its foundation, which is being with Jesus.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

One aspect that could not be measured because of the limited scope and time constraints of the project was AD's potential for multiplication. This is however, the result of Christians becoming more Christ-like. It is in the disciple's opportunity and ability to re-present Jesus to the world. Thankfully, this multiplying process is not dependent upon external structures like AD. This style of discipleship is simply one of many approaches, which has as its goal becoming more like Jesus.

The idea of discipleship should always be thought of in the context of multiplication--disciples making disciples. Therefore, the recommendation for future study will be centered upon providing opportunities for previous participants to become future facilitators. This has already begun as one of our couples provided leadership in a second AD, which featured, not twelve, but more than thirty participants. There is another AD being planned for the Spring which will include several couples from this project who will be placed in leadership positions.

Another recommendation for future study would be to see how AD might be implemented into largely academic environments such as universities, seminaries and within local congregations. AD's integration into these arenas may not be easily achieved however, I believe if AD could successfully infiltrate one or all of these settings the results could have wide systemic influence. Within this vein, I am planning to begin supernatural adventure schools that would utilize these processes along with other proven curricula and techniques found in existing schools of supernatural ministry. These partnerships are currently being pursued in hopes of seeing one of these schools birthed within the next several years.

Finally, with the heart of AD's desired transformation being beyond the individual and emphasizing the entire family, the true measure of this project will be in the generational fruit it bears. This will most likely remain unmeasurable, at least in connection with what has been explored in this study. However, the potential impact AD could have on families could resemble the impact a pebble has when dropped in a pond. Though it is small and seemingly insignificant in its initial impact, its ripples spread and affect the water around it far past its original splash.

### Final Words

After all the pre and post surveys were assessed, the 360 pages of journals sorted through, and the three hours of focus groups transcribed and studied, the heart of the project came down to one simple question: As a result of your participation in Adventure Discipleship, are you more like Jesus? With great delight I have frequently muted my own voice and positioned AD's participants to hear directly from the Lord. In these, my last words, I gladly quiet myself and, as much of the compelling narrative of Adventure Discipleship has been told through the words of its participants, the final words for this project will be theirs as well. When asked if their participation in AD resulted in them being more like Jesus the answer was an overwhelming "Yes." Here are a few of their replies.

Ms. Wonderful was enthusiastic in her response saying, "Yes, because it has made me step out and try to walk like He did!" While Ms. Wonderful highlighted the action and risk involved in Christ-likeness, Hannah emphasized the quieter quality saying, "Yes, just sitting with him on a regular basis – again – changes how I see everything and the things I do as well." When asked if he was more like Jesus David responded by sharing how he has been changed and how this has changed the ways he relates to others expressing, "I am. I am more characterized by love. I am much more personal with others, sharing His love and gifts/honor/words with them." Bob expressed a similar shift in understanding his own identity and his calling in participation with the Holy Spirit to express love saying, "I know I am! The Lord is calling me to greater love for others

which is challenging me to be aware of the Holy Spirit and the ways He would have me think/act."

Although each participant was asked this question independently from one another, when responding to the question of becoming more like Jesus Willy also spoke about a sweet reminder of his identity and its expression in love saying, "Yes! I think my spirit is awake more to love and how to receive His love and give it away. It was good to remember of what I get to do each week even when I don't feel like it! Thank you brother!" Finally, when asked whether he had become more like Jesus as a result of being a part of Adventure Discipleship, Mr. Wonderful enthusiastically replied,

Yes! I feel like I am so much better at loving people. In adventure discipleship, certain misconceptions about how to love and do ministry were pruned off and replaced with liberating truths. I think anyone that's been in ministry for a while knows the difference between knowing God and knowing about God. When I started doing this I realized I taught about that a lot but I needed to actually learn how to walk it out. This put us in a setting where there was a difference between knowing Him and just knowing about Him. It was going to be in an experience and not just talking. It wasn't a hypothetical experience or testimony or just a chance to see what this author wants you to know or what doctor so-and-so said. Instead, we went out and guess what we saw? It just highlighted Jesus! I think for the first time I felt like maybe I had an experience like Jesus when He talked about doing what He saw the Father doing. We can have all kinds of great teaching on this but for the first time it felt like I was there and saw what the Father was doing and then I did it! I am now better equipped to love like Jesus loves.

**APPENDIX A**  
**PRE AND POST SURVEY**



## Pre-Survey and Post-Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer each question as accurate as possible. Your name will NOT be shared, given, or published. The answers you provide will be used to qualitatively assess this discipleship model's effectiveness. Your participation is valuable in helping lives to be transformed by the power, presence, and love of God.

**Check the appropriate box:**

1. Please select your age category:

Under 18    19-26    27-35    36-45    46-55    56-65    65+

2a. How long have you been a Christian?

0-1 years    2-5 years    6-10 years    11-20 years    20+ years

2b. What Church do you currently attend? \_\_\_\_\_

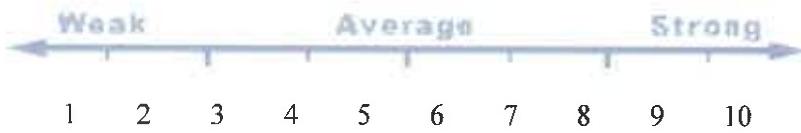
Read the statement and then determine your agreement with the statement.

If it perfectly describes you, circle on the Strong side, if it doesn't, circle the Weak side. Most answers fall between these extremes. Circle the number from 1 to 10.

3. I frequently spend time alone with Jesus.



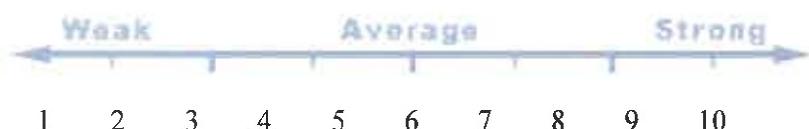
4. I consistently feel loved and accepted by God.



5. I am confident in my ability to recognize the voice of the Lord.



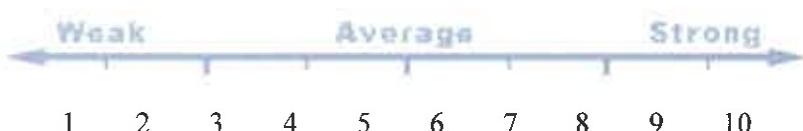
6. I am consistently aware of my identity in Christ.



7. I know who I am in Christ and have a clear and consistent understanding of my calling.



8. I consistently and intentionally share the love of God with those around me.



9. I regularly hear from the Lord about how He sees people and share it with them.



10. I frequently receive a word, dream, image or vision from God for someone else.



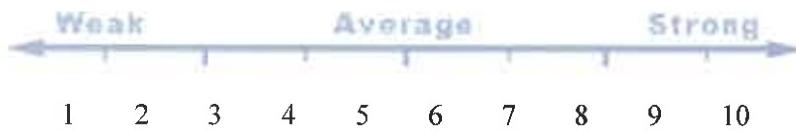
11. I often pray for people who need physical healing and see positive results.



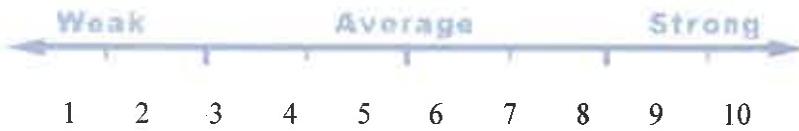
12. I am aware of the spiritual realm and my authority over the demons.



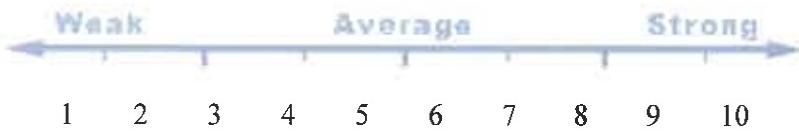
13. I regularly think of my relationship with Jesus as an adventure.



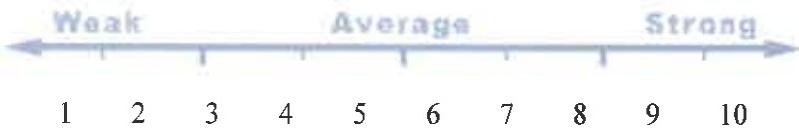
14. I consistently try things that are impossible for me to accomplish without God



15. I am confident in my ability to share my testimony with believers and non-believers.



16. The Lord often encourages me to pray for people I do not know.



17. I consistently enjoy taking risks that position me to depend on the goodness of God for His glory.



Write number below:

18. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you intentionally scheduled time to spend alone with Jesus? (a block of at least 1 hour or more) \_\_\_\_\_

19. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you recognized how God sees someone and told them? \_\_\_\_\_

20. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you heard from God for someone and shared that Word with them. \_\_\_\_\_

21. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you prayed, in person, for someone who needed physical healing? \_\_\_\_\_

22. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you done something you consider risky connected to your faith? \_\_\_\_\_

23. How many times in the past 6 weeks have you verbally shared your faith with a non-believer? \_\_\_\_\_

**Short Answer Essay**

24. Who are you?

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25. What is your calling?

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26. What is your mission?

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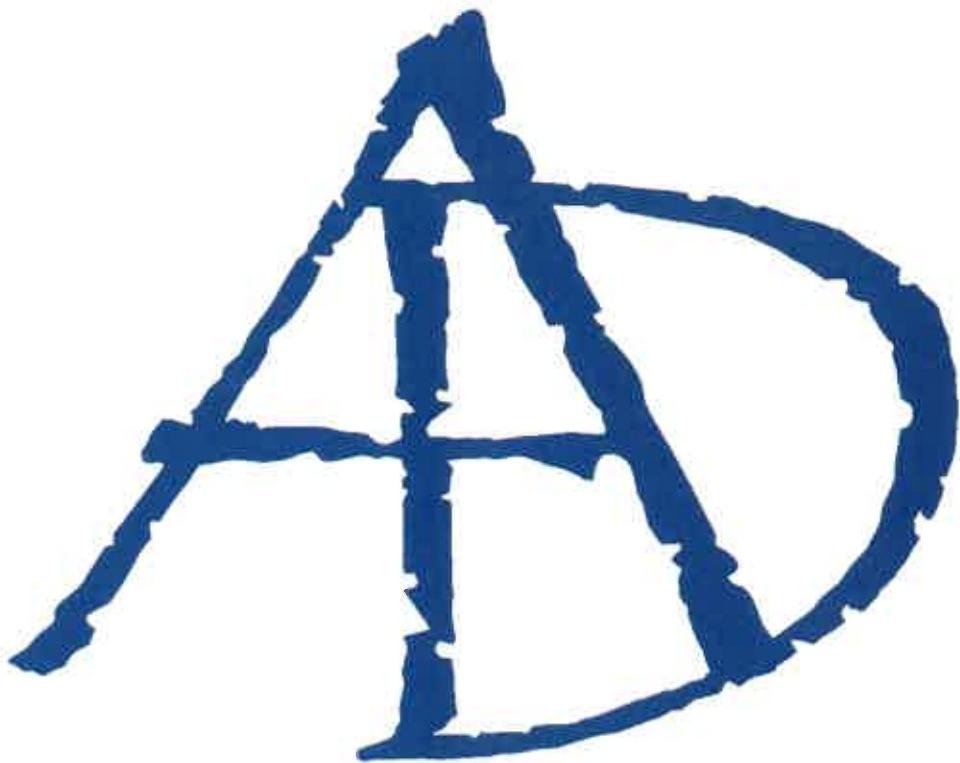
27. What does it mean to be a disciple?

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**APPENDIX B**  
**JOURNALS FOR PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2**



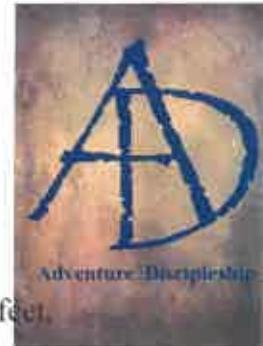
## Adventure Discipleship

*There are two kinds of adventurers: those who go truly hoping to find adventure and those who go secretly hoping they won't.*

*Rabindranath Tagore*

# Adventure Discipleship

## Come Away with Me Adventure Retreat Journal



### **John 13**

**5** After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

**6** He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

**7** Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

**8** "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

**9** "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

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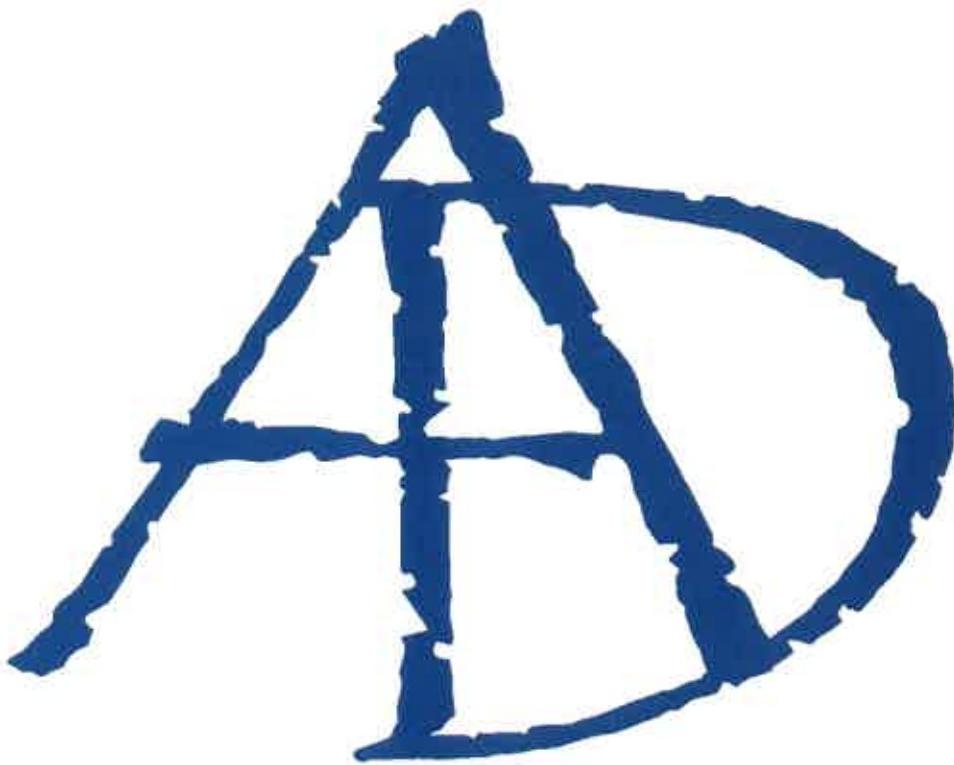
- ❖ What things have most dramatically increased your desire for more of God?
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- ❖ What barriers in your past have kept you from a deeper intimacy with Jesus?
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- ❖ What lies have you believed about yourself that have limited your relationship with Jesus?
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- ❖ What is keeping you, right now, from the depth of intimacy you desire?
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## Adventure Discipleship

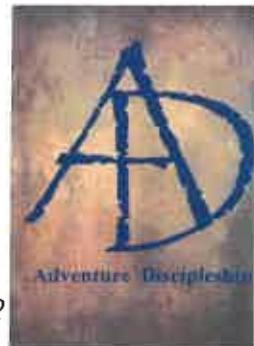
*No, no! The adventures first, explanations take such a dreadful time.*

*Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

## **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal



- ❖ What was it like to be presented with the choice to jump in or not jump in?

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- ❖ What did you choose and what was that experience like for you?

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- ❖ Tonight, when you invited Jesus to come and speak to you, what happened?

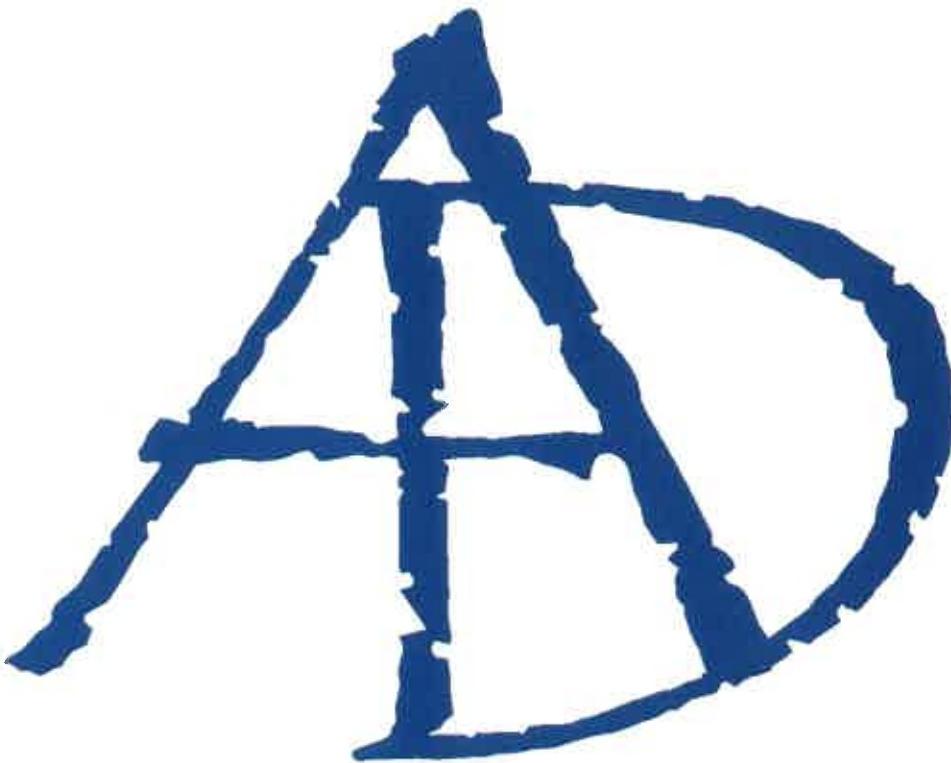
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- ❖ What reflections do you have as your first day comes to a conclusion? Meaningful experiences, emotions, revelations, understanding?



## Adventure Discipleship

*"Is he—quite safe?"*

*... "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver ... "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."*

*C. S. Lewis*

## **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal



- ❖ How would you describe your heart this morning as we embark on this adventure?

\_\_\_\_\_

- ❖ Take a moment and ask the Lord if there is anything He would like to share with you today before our journey begins. What words, impressions, visions or thoughts did you receive?

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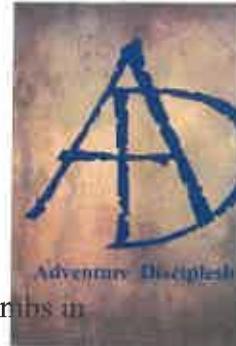
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- ❖ What is your prayer for today?

# Adventure Discipleship

## Come Away with Me Adventure Retreat Journal



### John 10

**1** "I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. **2** The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. **3** The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. **5** But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." **6** Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. **7** Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. **8** All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. **10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. **11** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12** The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. **13** The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. **14** "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16** I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. **17** The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

**24** The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." **25** Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. **27** My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."

- ❖ Take a moment and ask the Lord what He'd like to say to you from this text.  
What did He share with you?

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## **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal

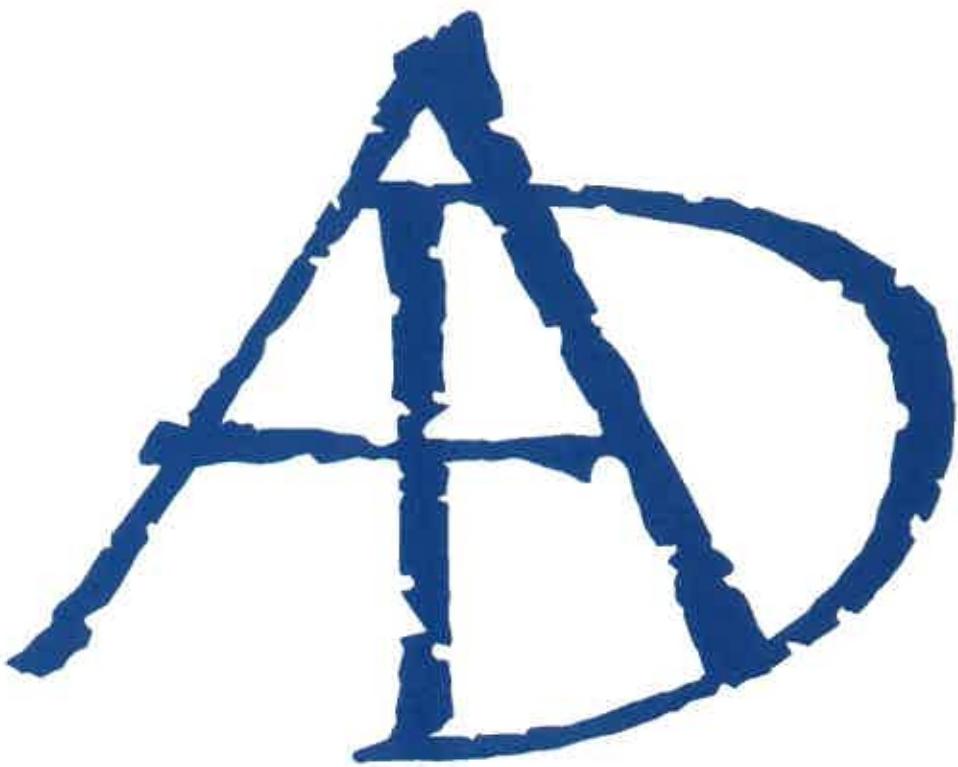
## How to hear and recognize His voice.



- ❖ Still your thoughts.
  - ❖ Look at Jesus and listen for His voice (thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc.).
  - ❖ Write down spontaneous free flowing thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc...
  - ❖ When you feel He has finished speaking, reflect on what you heard both privately and with others.
  - ❖ Let's start with an experiment. Find a spot alone. Ask Jesus,

**“What do you want to tell me about who I am?”**

Now still your thoughts. Look at Jesus and listen for His voice. Write down spontaneous free flowing thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc.



## Adventure Discipleship

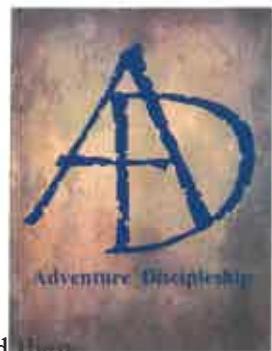
*"I went to the woods bBecause I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."*

*Henry David Thoreau*

## **Adventure Discipleship**

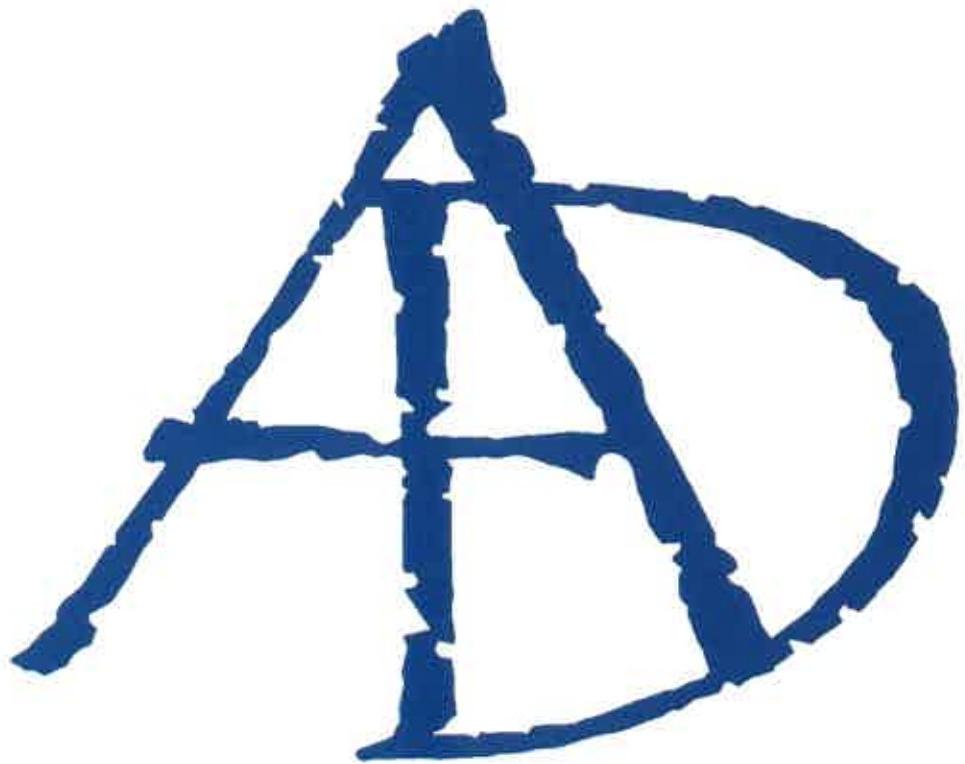
# **Come Away with Me**

## Adventure Retreat Journal



- ❖ Describe your experience of listening to the Lord for someone and then sharing with them what you heard. (describe what you did, what was said, how it felt, what you thought, how the person received the word)

- ❖ Describe your experience of someone else listening to the Lord and then sharing with you what they heard from the Lord about you. (describe what you did, what was said, how it felt, what you thought, how the person received the word)



## **Adventure Discipleship**

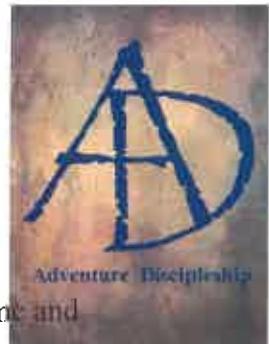
*An adventure is an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered."*

*G. K. Chesterton*

# **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal



- ❖ How would you describe your heart this morning after our free time and group challenge?

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- ❖ What has the Lord shared with you today?

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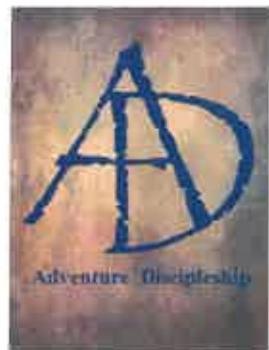
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- ❖ What do you want to say to Jesus right now?

## **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal



John 1

**47** When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." **48** "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." **49** Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." **50** Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that." **51** He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

John 5

**19** Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

**20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even *greater things* than these.

John 14

**10** Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

**11** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

**12** I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even *greater things* than these, because I am going to the Father.

**13** And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

**14** You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

- Take a moment and ask the Lord what He'd like to say to you from these texts. What did He share with you?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Come Away with Me Adventure Retreat Journal



### Luke 4

**18** "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Our calling is different than our mission. Our mission reflects our current assignment and is dependent upon the context and season in which we find ourselves. Our calling, on the other hand, reflects our constant collaborative partnership with the Holy Spirit. It is what we get to do with Him all the time, regardless of our current mission. Calling therefore, is something you are always doing resulting from who you are always being. Your calling is what you find yourself doing no matter where you are, who you're with or whatever else you're doing.

For instance, the Lord has revealed to me, Robbie, that my calling is:  
To know His heart and to reveal His heart.

Mike Bickle, the leader of a global ministry of prayer and worship, differentiates between his calling and mission saying,

Kansas City is not my dream. IHOP is my assignment. The dream of my heart is what happens between my heart and Jesus. No one can touch the dream of my heart. What I dream about at night is not a big IHOP. What I dream about at night is the anointing to connect with God's heart in the deepest way that God will give the human spirit. That is my dream, and if IHOP gets really big, my dream does not get helped at all. If IHOP disappears, my dream is not hurt at all. This is not my dream. This is my assignment. God will do His part, and I will do my part: I will work very hard but I am not going to recruit leaders, raise money, or think all night about what to do. I am going to connect with God.

- ❖ Let's experiment again. Find a spot alone. Ask Jesus,

**"What do you want to tell me about my calling?"**

Now still your thoughts. Look at Jesus and listen for His voice. Write down spontaneous free flowing thoughts, words, impressions, visions, etc.

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## **Adventure Discipleship**

# Come Away with Me

## Adventure Retreat Journal



❖ I am .....

❖ I am called to ....

# Adventure Discipleship

## Come Away with Me Adventure Retreat Journal



- ❖ This weekend I experienced God when ...

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- ❖ This weekend God revealed to me ...

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- ❖ My biggest take-aways from this weekend are ...

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- ❖ Looking ahead, I am excited to ...

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Daring to Live Daringly

### Power and Authority



The words, concepts and practical implications and applications of power and authority are deeply connected. Charles H. Kraft talks about the interrelatedness of biblical authority and power. Kraft describes the Greek word for power saying, “*Dunamis* (power) occurs some 118 times in the New Testament. It is the normal word for power, might, strength or force, and is often used in the plural to refer to miracles (“wonders”) in the phrase miracles and wonders, as in Acts 2:22, 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:4; or to supernatural beings (“powers”) as in Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:24, Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22.” While these instances represent overt demonstrations of God’s power, they are exorcised in the context of authority or *exousia*. Kraft makes a subtle but important differentiation between power and authority saying, “*Exousia*, though often referring to power, focuses on the right to use power rather than on the power itself.” Biblical authority then, is not the power itself but the ability to wield it. Authority then, reflects permission and commission to do and to act. Richard A. Dillon furthers the idea of authority saying, “Indeed, *exousia* draws surprisingly close to freedom (see 1 Cor 8:9) and can mean, in the full spectrum of human relations, the freedom to act or decide.” According to Kraft the word *exousia* “occurs 108 times in the New Testament,” and is always related to people.

The Gospel of Mark makes it clear that this authority does not have human origins but is given by God alone. Jesus receives this at his baptism, and it constitutes the essence of his divine son-ship and unique confidence to act in God's behalf. In this way authority is likened to a birthright given to Jesus as He is identified by the Father as ‘My Son.’ Baptism then, was the inaugurating event declaring Jesus’ identity, calling and empowerment for ministry. In this way, Jesus operates in both power and authority as a man laying aside the privileges of being God in order to portray what might be possible for *all* who would be indwelled and empowered by the same Holy Spirit

Mark was not simply talking about power and authority in the context of what was or would be available to Jesus alone. Rather the Greek words *dunamis*, power, and *exousia*, authority would be representative of what Jesus would give His disciples. In fact (the term is found nine times in Mark - six with reference to Jesus (1:22, 27; 2:10; 11:28, 29, 33), twice of the apostles (3:15, 6:7), and once in the simile of the man who "gave authority over his house to his servants" (13:34), which doubtless is an allusion to the disciples of Jesus. In the three instances where Jesus is not the subject, *exousia* describes the delegation of his authority on the disciples. Thus every occurrence of *exousia* in Mark reflects either directly or indirectly the authority of Jesus. Both power and authority are found in and flow from Jesus; firstly as He employed and secondly He empowered. It was the same purpose, to preach and cast out demons, which Jesus would call His disciples to well. It was the same intimacy that Jesus experienced with the Father on the mountain which He would offer to those He called. It was the same authority, the Holy Spirit in and on Him, which He would give to those He sent.

# **Adventure Discipleship**

## **Daring to Live Daringly**

### **Impartation**



#### **Hebrews 6:1-3**

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of instruction about washings and *laying on of hands*, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do, if God permits.

The Bible teaches in both the Old and New Testaments the principle of a person receiving an anointing from God. This anointing may be a gift or gifts of the Spirit, a filling of the Holy Spirit (especially for power) or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands is certainly not the only way of receiving an impartation from God. It is simply one of two ways seen in Scripture. The other way is waiting on God through prayer.

The following Scriptures will share examples of types of impartation through the laying on of hands and the results of those impartations.

#### **Old Testament**

Numbers 11:16-18

Joshua 34:9

#### **Position**

1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:22

Acts 6:6 and 13:1-3

#### **Healing/Blessing**

Matthew 19:13-15

Mark 10:16

Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23-25; and 16:18

Luke 4:40 and 13:13-15

Acts 9:17-19 and 28:8-9

#### **Impartation**

Acts 2:1-4; 4:29-31; 8:14-17; 10:44-47; and 19:6

John 20:21-22

Romans 1:11-12 and 15:17-19

2 Timothy 1:6

# Adventure Discipleship

## Love

### Weekly Adventure Journal

Tonight, when you were sent with your spouse to love;



- Where did you go?

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- How did you decide where to go?

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- What did you do?

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- What did you risk?

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- What did Jesus do through your risk? What was the result?

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- Describe your experience: emotions, expectations, encounters, etc . . .

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- What did the Lord teach you tonight from your experience, group exploration and teaching?

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- What two words best describe your heart as you anticipate implementing this in your home this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Love

### Weekly Adventure Journal



#### Tuesday Morning

- Ask the Lord what love looks like in your home.  
What did He say?

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#### Tuesday Evening

- How did you express love in your home today?

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#### Wednesday Morning

- Ask the Lord to show you His heart for your spouse.  
What did He say? Find a unique way to express His love to your spouse today.

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#### Wednesday Evening

- How did your spouse respond to being loved well today?

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**Thursday Morning**

- Ask the Lord about how He feels toward your children.  
What did He say? Find a way to show His love to your children today.

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**Thursday Evening**

- How did your children respond to being loved well today?

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**Friday Morning**

- As a family, ask the Lord who you can love well together today. Be creative and as a family show His love to someone else.

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**Friday Evening**

- How did the person or persons respond to being loved today? How did your family respond?

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**Saturday**

- In a sentence, what is the Lord teaching you this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Honor

### Weekly Adventure Journal

Tonight, when you were sent with your spouse to honor;



- Where did you go?

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- How did you decide where to go?

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- What did you do?

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- What did you risk?

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- What did Jesus do through your risk? What was the result?

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- Describe your experience: emotions, expectations, encounters, etc . . .

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- What did the Lord teach you tonight from your experience, group exploration and teaching?

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- What two words best describe your heart as you anticipate implementing this in your home this week?

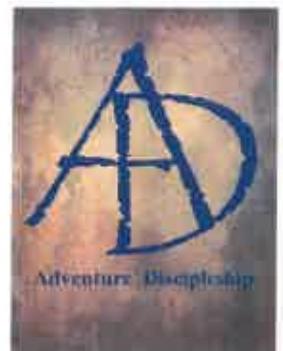
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# Adventure Discipleship

## Honor

### Weekly Adventure Journal



#### Tuesday Morning

- Ask the Lord what honor looks like in your home.  
What did He say?

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#### Tuesday Evening

- How did you express honor in your home today?

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#### Wednesday Morning

- Ask the Lord about each person in your home.  
Who does He say they are? Write each of them a note calling out their identity.

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#### Wednesday Evening

- How did those in your home respond to being honored today?

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**Thursday Morning**

- Ask the Lord about each person in your home.  
Who does He say they are? Verbally share honor with each of them about their identity.

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**Thursday Evening**

- How did you respond to being honored today?

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**Friday Morning**

- As a family, ask the Lord who in your cell phone you should text today (1-5 names). What did He say? Send a text to each person on your heart sharing about their identity.

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**Friday Evening**

- How were your text messages received and how did the recipients respond?

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**Saturday**

- In a sentence, what is the Lord teaching you this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Prophecy

### Weekly Adventure Journal

Tonight, when you were sent with your spouse to prophecy;



- Where did you go?

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- How did you decide where to go?

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- What did you do?

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- What did you risk?

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- What did Jesus do through your risk? What was the result?

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- Describe your experience: emotions, expectations, encounters, etc . . .

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- What did the Lord teach you tonight from your experience, group exploration and teaching?

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- What two words best describe your heart as you anticipate implementing this in your home this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Prophecy Weekly Adventure Journal



### Tuesday Morning

- Ask the Lord what it looks like to create a prophetic culture in your home. What did He say?

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### Tuesday Evening

- How did you partner with the Lord in your home today?

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### Wednesday Morning

- Ask the Lord about His heart for each person in your home. What did He say? Write each of them a note expressing His heart.

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### Wednesday Evening

- How did those in your home respond to the Father's heart today?

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**Thursday Morning**

- As a family, ask the Lord about any promises He has for you and your family. Who did He say? Somewhere visible, write these promises for your family.

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**Thursday Evening**

- What was it like to listen as a family and declare these promises today?

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**Friday Morning**

- As a family, ask the Lord what He wants you to focus on together in this season. What did He say? Pray together for His will in your family on earth as it is in heaven.

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**Friday Evening**

- What was your experience like praying together today?

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**Saturday**

- In a sentence, what is the Lord teaching you this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Healing

### Weekly Adventure Journal

Tonight, when you were sent with your spouse to heal;



- Where did you go?

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- How did you decide where to go?

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- What did you do?

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- What did you risk?

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- What did Jesus do through your risk? What was the result?

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- Describe your experience: emotions, expectations, encounters, etc . . .

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- What did the Lord teach you tonight from your experience, group exploration and teaching?

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- What two words best describe your heart as you anticipate implementing this in your home this week?

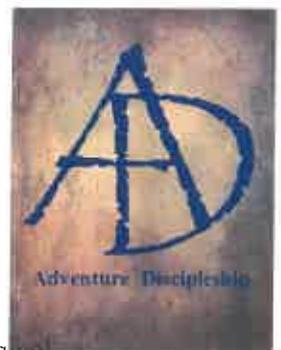
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# Adventure Discipleship

## Healing

### Weekly Adventure Journal



#### Tuesday Morning

- Ask the Lord what places in your home needs healing this week (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc . . . What did He say?)

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#### Tuesday Evening

- How did you partner with the Lord in your home today?

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#### Wednesday Morning

- Ask the Lord what He would like to heal in you. What did He say?

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#### Wednesday Evening

- What places of healing have you noticed?

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**Thursday Morning**

- As a family, experiment with healing today. Remember, you carry His authority.

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**Thursday Evening**

- What happened as you prayed for healing today?

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**Friday Morning**

- As a couple, ask the Lord what He wants to healing in between you. What did He say? Pray together for this healing.

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**Friday Evening**

- What was your experience like praying together today?

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**Saturday**

- In a sentence, what is the Lord teaching you this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Love

### Weekly Adventure Journal

Tonight, when you were sent with your spouse to love;



- Where did you go?

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- How did you decide where to go?

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- What did you do?

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- What did you risk?

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- What did Jesus do through your risk? What was the result?

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- Describe your experience: emotions, expectations, encounters, etc . . .

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- What did the Lord teach you tonight from your experience, group exploration and teaching?

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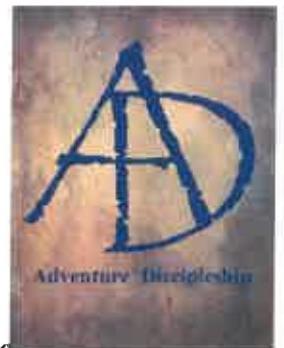
- What two words best describe your heart as you anticipate implementing this in your home this week?

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# Adventure Discipleship

## Final Week Weekly Adventure Journal



**1. What area has been most impacted by your participation in Adventure Discipleship?**

Personal

Marriage

Family

**2. What area has been most challenged or stretched by your participation in A.D.?**

Personal

Marriage

Family

**3. In what area has there been more personal revelation as a result of your participation?**

Identity – Who I am in Christ.

Calling – What I get to do in relationship with God regardless of context.

Mission – My current assignment.

**4. How has your participation impacted:**

Intimacy with Jesus -

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Understanding and Exercising Authority -

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Seeing your relationship with Jesus and life as Adventure -

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**5. Reflect on the form of A.D. both in the retreat and our weekly adventures.**

**Experience:** An action which produced vulnerability positioning you or encounter.

**Exploration:** A group reflection about the experience, its emotions, results, etc.

**Information:** A biblical teaching which brings scriptural insight to the experience.

**Impartation:** A spiritual exchange from one person to another through prayer.

**Implementation:** Applying what was learned to the intimate places of life (family).

**What were the positives or negatives of this flow?**

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**6. In which area did you experience greatest increase as a result of your participation?**

**Power**

**Love**

**Purpose**

**7. What are your top three takeaways? (Try to limit to one sentence each)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Are you more like Jesus as a result of participating in A. D.?**

**If so, how? If not, why?**

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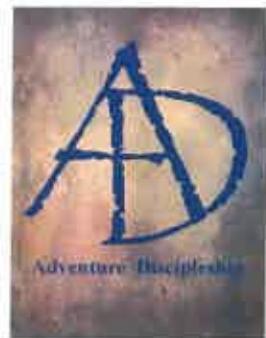
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## **APPENDIX C**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

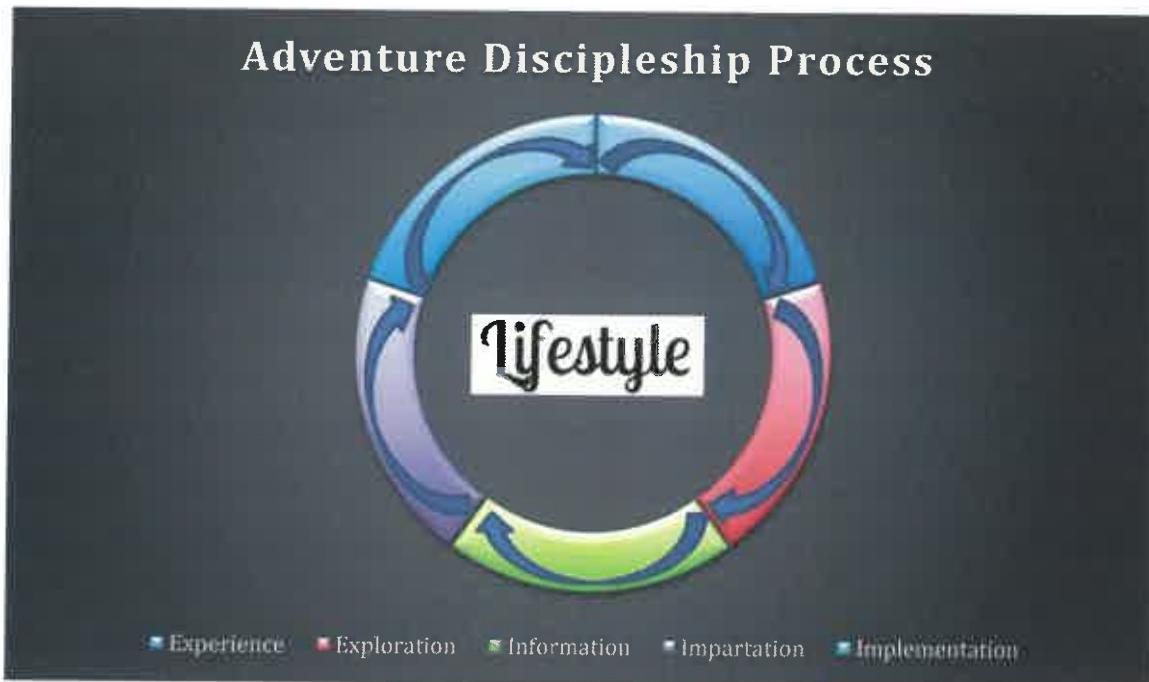


## POST-PARTICIPATION

### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is walking with the Lord an adventure and why is it important to see it that way?
2. Does adventure and risk make you more available to experience or encounter God? Explain.
3. How has Adventure Discipleship revealed being wild or untamed is an important aspect of living the Christian life?
4. Does being in nature facilitate an experience with God? Explain.
5. In what ways has Adventure Discipleship deepened your intimacy with the Lord?
6. Why was it important to start on the mountain with a retreat?
7. Why was important that we did not stay on the mountain but also went into the metropolis?
8. What was it like moving from experience to exploration to information rather than the tradition information to explanation to experience?
9. What was it like and what was the value of seeing that first fruits of this into the home, creates that lifestyle?
10. Are you more like Jesus as a result of being a part of AD?

**APPENDIX D**  
**ADVENTURE DISCIPLESHP PROCESS**



Adventure Discipleship's process was a key component in creating change in the lives of its participants. The intention of this innovative process was to move participants away from an event oriented relationship with God and into one which invaded every aspect of life. While the results were initially positive in this regard, I do believe the six week process only scratched the surface in undoing decades of performance based religious experience and establishing an authentic and untamed expression of Jesus in the home. The fallacy of this model, like any, is the temptation of those who use it to become dependent upon it, thus simply creating another system intended to yield a lifestyle but only producing program dependent participants. Adventure Discipleship's greatest strength is its push toward a private implementation in the home that has the potential to radically change the participant's life outside of the home as well. If however, the process remains the focal point, this dynamic model becomes static and its practitioners reliant upon it, rather than the relationship it is intended to produce.

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